

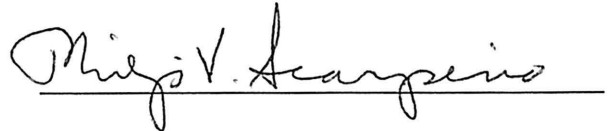
THE FOUNDING OF SANBORN MILLS
IN PRE-REVOLUTIONARY
NEW HAMPSHIRE

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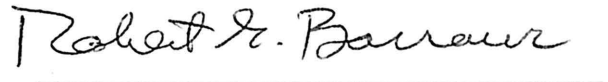
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New Hampshire, 1796



Map 1

State of New Hampshire, 1796, B. Tanner
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Introduction

Sanborn Farm, on Sanborn Road, in Loudon, New Hampshire, is located in the Suncook River watershed in central New Hampshire, a region that supported agriculture and manufacturing from the middle of the eighteenth until well into the twentieth century. When you turn off New Hampshire State Highway 129 and then, after about half a mile, slow down to turn onto a dirt road called Sanborn Road, there is not much to indicate that, in the next few minutes, you may feel you have driven back somewhere between one hundred and two hundred years.

If it is your first visit, the scene that unfolds as you drive over the rise is astonishing. The first indication of what is to come is the white cupola that stands out against the sky above the top of the next rise. That first view of the cow barn is deceptive because the distance and the placement of the barn in a slight valley belie its massive size. Fields bounded by stone walls, a large white farmhouse, and two barns, sit just as they have since before the turn of the twentieth century. Open hay fields surrounded by stone walls extend over low rolling hills on both sides of the road. The 1890s era wooden farm house and horse barn are just ahead and the huge cow barn sits up behind the house.

Just past the horse barn, down the hill to the bridge by the outlet of the pond, sit the blacksmith shop, the gristmill, and the sawmill. By now, you have driven back another sixty-five years. The milldams and buildings date back to 1829. The two mills and blacksmith shop are the heart of a not-for-profit organization known as Sanborn Mills Incorporated. Its mission, in part, is to use

the restoration and operation of these buildings and their workings to advance the knowledge of nineteenth century American millwrighting, saw milling, grist milling, timberframing, and blacksmithing through workshops, internships, and apprenticeship programs.

When you come to Sanborn Mills today, you may try to imagine how such a place came to exist. The research in this paper will shed some light on that. This study will establish the background and serve as a basis for further investigation of Sanborn Mills as an early nineteenth century family farm and mill complex. It will add to knowledge of the history of Loudon and New Hampshire by documenting a part of the story of the region during its very early years that has not been told before. It will also provide an example for researchers and writers of how a history can be written when only limited and seemingly disparate source material exists.

Looking back from today, Loudon is a tiny place on the eastern edge of a very large nation, but in the two decades before the American Revolution, this place played a central role in the settling of the interior of New England. In 1773, Loudon Center was an important trading center at a crossroads of the highways and waterways from Portsmouth to Canterbury, and from Boston to Gilmanton. In 1773, Boston and Portsmouth were very busy urban centers and seaports that connected New England to business, government and family connections in the mother country. Canterbury and Gilmanton were distant outposts in the settlement in the New World.

The generation of English men and women who settled and began farming and manufacturing in Loudon in the 1770s created and lived through an intricate array of social, ecological, cultural, economic, and political changes. As the agricultural economy of the province shifted from self-sufficiency to a market-based capitalist system, patterns of land ownership and local governance and community organization became far more decentralized than any previous generations had known.

The settlers who came from the seacoast brought their traditional social, political, and religious organizations with them and tried to recreate those traditions in the interior. Many of those traditions can still be seen today in the pattern of place names, roads, and stone walls running throughout the township. However, the process of moving so far from home and claiming the land for their own use opened the way for many changes in the traditional social and political organization of the newly settled communities and, eventually, the nation.

In After the Revolution, Joseph Ellis asserts that the generation of Americans who came of age during the Revolution grew old in a culture and society drastically different from the one in which they were born, and traditional assumptions about lack of personal freedom and the importance of community responsibility eroded under the pressure of demographic and economic expansion.¹ The time of the development of the property and the mill complex, the 1770s until the 1820s, from the American Revolution to the Industrial

¹ Joseph J. Ellis, After the Revolution, Profiles of Early American Culture, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979), passim.

Revolution, was a pivotal period in the political and cultural development of the United States. Although John Sanborn did not live to see the outcome of these changes, his life and his participation in his community spanned the transition from the cultural and political European traditions to emerging American ways.

This study will begin by describing the research I used to provide historical context to the founding of Sanborn Mills. The next three sections will explore the economic expansion made possible by colonists claiming and profiting from the land and the vast timber resources they found in New England. Claiming and dividing the land for themselves allowed English settlers in the interior of New England to take advantage of greater economic opportunity than had been available to any previous generation in the colonies or in Europe. After looking at economic expansion, I discuss demographic expansion, beginning with the traditions of childhood and father-son apprenticeships, and how those were eroded as the younger generation moved to claim land and settle the interior of New Hampshire. The experience of young men and women moving farther from their parents than most anyone had done since coming to the New World accelerated their involvement in community and political affairs. Their independence and experience of self-governance also fostered the movement toward declaring America independent from England. The final sections of the work are a chronological look at the war years in the life of John Sanborn and in the town of Loudon. The experience of governing and defending themselves before and during the civil rebellion with England established new traditions that formed the political basis of the government of the new nation.

Historical Context

Today, Sanborn Farm is unusual in New Hampshire because so many of the building types once associated with New Hampshire farming and nineteenth century milling are still standing and are in relatively good condition. Begun as a sawmill on a pond shortly before the American Revolution, Sanborn Mills grew into a prosperous family farm and regional timber and grain milling complex. The property remained in the Sanborn family from the 1770s until the 1990s.

Although the survival of a large farmstead with most of the buildings intact into the twenty-first century is uncommon, the story of John Sanborn's settling there and beginning, as quickly as possible, to profit from the natural resources of the area is not at all unusual. His story serves as a specific illustration of the larger picture of the early history of New Hampshire and the United States.

The story of John Sanborn moving to the New Hampshire frontier, buying a tract of land by the edge of a pond, and founding a regional milling complex just before the American Revolution requires a bit of background. In order to understand the historical context of Sanborn's move to Loudon in the 1770s, I used several state and town histories. Jeremy Belknap's three-volume History of New Hampshire, first published in Boston in 1792, is the standard starting place for a general history of the state. Belknap lived through and participated in many of the events he wrote about. His History of New Hampshire was part of an outpouring of state histories after the American Revolution. It is an example of the body of writing that appeared in the two decades after the war designed to define and set the new nation and its citizens apart from Europe. For a more

modern interpretation, my research leans heavily on Jere Daniell's Experiment in Republicanism: New Hampshire Politics and the American Revolution and Colonial New Hampshire: A History. For details about the settlement of Loudon, I used town histories of Exeter, Brentwood, and Canterbury, as well as studies of Merrimack and Belknap Counties.

All genealogical information about the Sanborn family came from V. C. Sanborn's Genealogy of the Family of Samborne or Sanborn in England and America, 1194-1898, published in 1899. Birth, marriage, military, tax, and death records place events of his life on a timeline or compare his status to other members of his community. It is not until we look at the public record of town meetings that we can begin to get some idea of what his life in his community was like and how his fellow citizens regarded him. Here, the picture of who he was in the context of his community begins to emerge.

By placing a single person or family story in the broader context of history, it becomes possible to imagine every person's story as one of the threads that makes up a fabric of historical interpretation. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that we can know very much about an individual by piecing together bits of information about where they lived, engaged in business, or served in war. Without a written record of his own, it is necessary to look *around* him in the public record to begin to understand who he was in New England and what role he had in his community.

Like the rest of his generation, John Sanborn grew old in a very different world than the one he had been born into. His thoughts about his life, his work,

his relationships with family and community, his responses to news of the day, and even his plans for the future were shaped far more by European tradition than by the American Revolution. We cannot know how or even if his thoughts about the most suitable form of government or his own rights to self-determination changed during his life.

The public records provide information about where Sanborn was at different times in his life, his economic status, how he fit into his community, and how his fellow citizens in the community regarded him. From birth and death records, we see the endpoints. His marriage and childbirth records give us some idea of how his household evolved. His military service records show that he enlisted and served on the side of the Americans. It is difficult to tell if he actually saw warfare or if he, as was common in his day for a man of his status, hired a man to go in his place. The town tax records reveal that he was among the wealthiest citizens of Loudon throughout his life.

For evidence of John Sanborn's life in Loudon, I primarily used the first two volumes of the Loudon Town Records from 1773 to 1791. Volume One contains records of town meetings and Volume Two records tax assessments in Loudon. When we look at the public record at the level of individual transactions, a picture of who he was in his community begins to emerge. While the town *meeting* records indicate Loudon citizens were voting on schooling and how much money to spend on preaching of the gospel and roads, the town *tax* records give a far more detailed picture. The annual tax records show payments made to individual citizens for goods and services they provided to the town.

The tax records also show annual and special assessments collected from heads of households based on the value of their real and personal property.

I examined Sanborn deeds in the Rockingham and Merrimack County Registries of Deeds to find out how the Sanborn Farm came together. I looked closely at deeds and town records during Sanborn's years in Canterbury and Loudon, especially the 1770s through the 1790s. During those twenty years, of the sixty deeds listed in the Grantee Index under the name *John Sanborn* in the Rockingham County Registry of Deeds, thirty-five of them belong to this John Sanborn and relate to land acquisitions near the pond that is now known as Sanborn Pond in Loudon, New Hampshire.

In order to clarify what Sanborn had in mind, and what type of property he bought, I compared the Loudon Town Plan, with its lot numbers and deed descriptions, to a modern United States Geographical Survey topographical map. While comparing the two maps requires some adjustment for different parts of the map, the original main roads still exist and the scale of the town plan is roughly one half of the scale of the 1:24,000 topographical map. Even though the ecosystem has changed over time, I assumed that the topography remained about the same. Combining those two maps with the ecological history work of William Cronon and Tom Wessels, I could make reasonable guesses about the land and landscape Sanborn encountered when he arrived. A set of maps made by the State of New Hampshire from the 1930s to the 1970s, called the *White Pine Blister Rust Maps*, give a good indication of how the Sanborn family used the land agriculturally in the last century. Armed with some disclaimers and

some historical context, and using this combination of maps and plans, it is possible to make a reasonable guess at what John Sanborn found when he got there and how the place that we see today came about.

To get a better idea of life in early New England, I used the progression of probate inventories from John Sanborn's grandfather in 1727 to his father's in 1787. Probate records can be particularly helpful because they are the only public records in which the author expresses discernable sentiment about his or her life and family members.

I also used John Sanborn's probate inventory, from 1826, to learn more about his farm and home life in Loudon. In the absence of written records left by Sanborn himself, I used the diaries and annual summaries of Samuel Lane, a tanner and surveyor from Stratham, New Hampshire. Lane was about the age of John Sanborn's father and kept daily and yearly records and observations from 1739 until after 1800. Because of Lane's business dealings in the seacoast area and his role in forming the state government, it is quite likely he and John's father knew one another. Lane's records and observations on current events, weather, crops, and the growing "Baptist Controversy" allow us to have an insider's perspective on life in late eighteenth-century New England.

To attempt to answer the question of how Sanborn Mills came to exist, this paper begins with how English settlers got to the area. A combination of economic, political, and demographic factors during the period from 1715 to 1765 led to a massive rush of settlers into the interior of New England after the end of the French and Indian War. John Sanborn was one of those settlers.

Economic historian, Jere Daniell, wrote about the fifty-year period from 1715 to 1765 as one of unusual political stability and unprecedented economic growth. The period was one in which commerce and trade numbers grew both within the country and internationally. Material culture historians, like Laura Thatcher Ulrich and Stephanie Wolf, looked at the same period and saw a consumer revolution with more and greater variety of consumer goods being available to more classes of people than ever before. Agricultural historian, Howard Russell, noted that these generations no longer had to clear the land and had more time to produce agricultural surplus and manufactured goods for an expanding market. Environmental historians, like William Cronon and Tom Wessels, saw the same period as one in which settled coastal areas had been stripped of wood supplies; hunger for timber products for export and home use drove lumbermen deeper and deeper into the interior. By combining these interpretations, it is possible to develop a more complete picture of life in pre-revolutionary New England.

John Sanborn was born in 1747, midway through the fifty-year period of political stability and unprecedented economic prosperity and geographic expansion in the New Hampshire Province. The son of a house wright and sawmill owner, he was a fourth generation Sanborn to be born in New England.

He learned carpentry, saw milling, farming, land speculation, and surveying while he was growing up at his father's house near the seacoast.²

At the age of 23, he bought the first of many pieces of property in the southwestern corner of Canterbury, New Hampshire.³ That section of Canterbury later became Loudon, New Hampshire. He was a part of a generation of young men and women who migrated from the coastal towns and settled in the interior. By the end of the eighteenth-century, affordable farm land in the coastal, more settled, areas had become almost non-existent. In order to have a homestead of their own that was large enough to prosper on, those young men had to move farther away from their families than any previous generation had moved since English men and women began coming to the New World.

The story of that generation yearning to leave their fathers' houses was so universal in the second half of the eighteenth-century that writers promoting independence from England adopted the image as a metaphor to call for revolution.⁴ More young men left their family homesteads than ever before. The demographic shift adapted well into Revolutionary rhetoric: young men leaving their fathers' houses took steps toward individual freedom, self-determination, and liberty. Those who moved from the old towns to the new participated in a cultural and political identity shift from English subject to American citizen.

²The dates and genealogical information come from V. C. Sanborn, Genealogy of the Family of Samborne or Sanborn in England and America, 1194-1898 (Concord, New Hampshire: Rumford Press, 1899). The occupations listed for Elisha Sanborn and his son, John Sanborn, come from various deeds and court records as discussed below.

³Rockingham County Registry of Deeds (RCRD). Book 105, 492.

⁴Stephanie Grauman Wolf, As Various as Their Lands: The Everyday Lives of Eighteenth-Century Americans (New York: HarperPerennial, 1993), 134-135. See also, Joseph J. Ellis After the Revolution, 20.

In 1773, Sanborn bought the property where the gristmill and sawmill now stand.⁵ Two years later, the American Revolution began. With the outbreak of war, he put his plans for establishing his own family homestead aside and participated in the Revolution. In 1777, when warfare in New England came to an end, he began buying land again and reappears in the deed records. In pre-war deeds, he is identified as John Sanborn, yeoman. After the war, he is identified as a Gentleman. That same year, he also reappears in the town records with a military title, Lieutenant John Sanborn. Those changes in his title indicate an increased social status in his community.

An array of social, cultural and ecological transformations took place at the end of the eighteenth-century. By the time Sanborn died, in 1826, the mill complex he founded, the region, the state, and the nation had been through tremendous political, economic, environmental, and cultural changes. Many of those changes can be traced through the ways the European settlers identified and claimed the land and how they defined their communities.

⁵RCD. Book 106, 83.

New Hampshire, 1796, Detail



Map 2

Detail: New Hampshire, 1796

Used with permission of the New Hampshire Historical Society

Good Prospects, Good Beginnings

Despite the uncertainties of the Province's relationship with the mother country, February 6, 1773, must have been an exciting and gratifying day for John Sanborn. That day, the young Englishman purchased a second parcel of land in Canterbury in the English Province of New Hampshire.⁶ Now he could profit more from his share of the sawmill at the outlet of Gilmantown Pond. He could put to good use all that he had learned growing up at his father's sawmill. The future must have looked very promising to the twenty-six year old John Sanborn.

Three years before, when he bought his first tract of land in Canterbury, he had been working and living at his father's house in Brintwood.⁷ He, like many young men in New England in the second half of the eighteenth-century, had looked to the interior to buy land of his own. Land near the coast had become increasingly subdivided and prohibitively expensive. Farther inland was the only place a man could buy enough acreage and hope to prosper.

John's great great grandfather had moved to the New World as an English colonist in 1632. The Sanborn family had profited each generation by acquiring rights to land and extracting the resources.⁸ He had the support of his family, and he was well prepared for the move. He had learned carpentry, joinery, saw

⁶Ibid.

⁷RCD, Book 105, 492. The deed identifies him as "John Sanborn of Brintwood, Labourour."

⁸Sanborn, *passim*. See Appendix A, Genealogy of John Sanborn.

milling, and land surveying, as well as reading, writing, and keeping accounts as he was growing up in his father's house near the seacoast.

Sanborn's move to Canterbury was not a spontaneous one. He and his father had planned it for several years and coordinated the move with his family's social and business network. Although the area was sparsely populated, he and his father knew this certain tract of land marked by a "great rock on the edge of Gilmantown Pond" very well. His father had been planning to build a sawmill there for more than six years.⁹ They knew they could reap profits for the Sanborn family and the Crown from the rich timber resources of the new area.

Abraham Batchelder, the man who sold the parcel to Sanborn, was a shareholder in the sawmill and he was a relative of the Sanborn family.¹⁰ He was one of the first settlers in the area, and his own homestead was on the other side of the pond. Batchelder family tradition states that he had found the land while surveying the township and looking for meadowland.¹¹ No doubt, there had been trails used by Native Americans leading to the pond. Sanborn Pond, as it is now known, is a deep pond sheltered on three sides by hills. Even today, it is easy to see why people connected to the land for their livelihood would choose that site.

⁹New Hampshire Division of Records and Archives (NHRA), Provincial Court Cases, Number 19533. A sawmill existed at the Loudon site from at least the mid-1760s. If any foundations or structure remained on the site after the turn of the nineteenth century, they were covered by water when Sanborn's son, Edmond, had a 14-foot dam built in 1829.

¹⁰The Batchelders and the Sanborns of New Hampshire both descended from the Reverend Stephen Bachilor. I did not research Batchelder genealogy and do not know their exact relationship.

¹¹Hamilton Hurd, History of Merrimack and Belknap Counties New Hampshire (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis and Company, 1885), 500. Carol Kammen warns against relying too heavily on this type of "mug history" because of questions about how the historians who compiled those types of histories decided what to include and what to leave out. On Doing Local History: Reflections on What Local Historians Do, Why, and What it Means (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 1995), 62.

Sanborn's prospects looked very good. He planned to bring his future wife, Ruth Rand, of Hampton, to the new homestead and start a family.¹² He, no doubt, hoped that his hard work and planning would allow him to buy more land and to settle his children around him, just like the previous generations in his family had done. He probably also hoped, like most colonists, that Parliament would come to its senses and return the traditional rights and privileges of Englishmen to the colonists living in New England, and that tensions between the Province and the Crown would ease. He had no way of knowing that the colonists' relationship with the Mother Country would deteriorate to war within two years or that within ten years he would no longer be a subject of the King of England; he would be a citizen of an independent nation. He could not have known that the farm and milling complex he established at the site would remain in his family for the next two and a quarter centuries. How did he get to this mill site and farmstead on a pond almost in the middle of New Hampshire?

Speculators

The story of how Loudon came to be settled in the last half of the eighteenth-century serves as an illustration of how almost all of the land in New Hampshire between the seacoast and the Connecticut River Valley came to be settled during that period. Economic expansion and a ten-fold population boom,

¹²Sanborn, 164. Eight months after buying the parcel bordering the pond, Sanborn married Ruth Rand of Hampton (another Provincial New Hampshire seacoast town) in October, 1774. Their first child was born a year after that, in November, 1775.

combined with dwindling availability of land and timber resources near the seacoast, led to a great movement of settlers to the interior of New Hampshire in the last third of the eighteenth-century.¹³ John Sanborn was among that group of English settlers.

Farmers, woodsmen, pioneers, and settlers are all classic American icons, often celebrated as the backbone of the country. However, there was another classic American endeavor that preceded all the others. It came before the hardy woodsmen felled the trees or the self-sufficient Yankee farmer and the honest, hardworking yeoman built all those tidy white villages clustered around a common, and farmsteads with connected farmhouses and barns. Before any of that, there was an even older, although less celebrated, traditional American occupation. The American real estate speculator went before the woodsman, the farmer, and the yeoman, leading the way into the howling wilderness to profit from its taming.

Jere Daniell, in Colonial New Hampshire, described how real estate speculation developed in several different forms in New Hampshire depending on which authority claimed the land and what method they used to distribute property rights. From the early seventeenth century, the Mason Proprietors, with a land grant, and Massachusetts Bay Colony, with a charter to establish and govern settlements and conduct business, both claimed the territory that became New Hampshire. In 1679, when England established New Hampshire as a royal

¹³Jere Daniell, Colonial New Hampshire, A History (Millwood, NY: ITO Press, 1981), 24-25.

colony and officially separated New Hampshire from Massachusetts, the Provincial government also began to distribute land within New Hampshire.¹⁴ Boundary and territory disputes between the three English entities continued well into the eighteenth-century.¹⁵

The Royal Governor of New Hampshire distributed land and established new townships through a liberal system of grants to groups and individuals. Beginning in the 1720s, in a race with Massachusetts to claim and settle the territory that became southern and central New Hampshire, the Royal Governor granted large tracts of land to groups of proprietors in successive tiers of townships in the interior. The system of proprietary grants was created to establish jurisdiction and encourage settlement in lands where there were very few settlers. Canterbury, which included present day Loudon, was granted in 1727.¹⁶

Proprietors had the right to distribute land, and the responsibility to settle the townships. That meant they had to provide the inhabitants with roads, mills, and a meeting house -- services necessary to carry on community life in the eighteenth-century. Real estate speculation fueled the growth in the number of New Hampshire towns well beyond the needs of the population. Over 140 new towns were founded in the period between 1715 and 1765.¹⁷

¹⁴Daniell, *Colonial*, 217.

¹⁵Several Indian tribes, Scotch-Irish settlers, Holland, and France also claimed much of this territory, but that is the subject of several other volumes of work.

¹⁶Daniell, *Colonial*, 31.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 143.

The system was flexible enough to accommodate land speculators with a wide range of time or money to invest. Some sold their land immediately, some moved to the township to participate in its development, and some simply paid their taxes and waited for property values to rise. Even though proprietorship required some capital, land ownership in a new township was not out of reach of average working colonists in the second half of the eighteenth-century. Often, younger men from an old town worked as a group to purchase rights and settle in the new township.¹⁸

In addition to providing a mechanism for settling new townships, the proprietor system also served to make and keep political alliances for the family of the governor and to reward service in the military. In the townships chartered during the 1720s, Governor Wentworth reserved one square mile for himself and distributed the rest, rewarding old friends and making new ones. In the five towns granted in 1727, every member of the Assembly (an early version of the House of Representatives) was a proprietor.¹⁹ John Sanborn's grandfather, also named John Sanborn, (see Appendix A) was a proprietor in several of the townships granted in the 1720s. Most importantly for John Sanborn, the younger, and his father, Elisha, grandfather Sanborn was one of the proprietors in the townships of Chester, in 1722, and Canterbury, in 1727.²⁰

¹⁸Ibid., 156.

¹⁹Nancy Coffet Heffernan and Ann Stecker, New Hampshire, Crosscurrents in Its Development (Grantham, New Hampshire: Thomas and Rutter, 1986), 42.

²⁰New Hampshire State Papers (NHSP) (Concord: New Hampshire Historical Society, various editors) Vol. XXIV, 527 and 568.

The elder John Sanborn was born in 1681, just two years after New Hampshire became a Province, and lived most of his life in Hampton on the homestead his father had given to him. He was an active participant in political developments and the economic and geographic expansion of New Hampshire.²¹

As an educated son of a wealthy and respected family, John Sanborn's grandfather was able to do well for himself and his family politically. He served as a selectman for his town and as a solicitor and agent for the Province.²² During his lifetime, he substantially increased the family wealth and status through his influence with the Provincial government and by marrying well. However, his greatest gift to his heirs came from land speculation. He left large tracts of land to all his older sons. John Sanborn's father, Elisha, received one third of his lands in Chester.²³ As for his proprietor's right in Canterbury, he probably never saw the township or the land where his grandson settled, since he died later that same year.²⁴

Economic and Territorial Growth

Before the end of Queen Anne's War in 1715, for the first one hundred years of European settlement, the population was concentrated in Portsmouth, Exeter, Hampton, and Dover, the four original towns along the seacoast. The half century between the end of Queen Anne's War in 1715 and the French and

²¹Sanborn, 77-79. V. C. Sanborn summarized numerous entries about John Sanborn's grandfather from the Provincial Records of New Hampshire and the Town Records of Hampton.

²²RCRD, Book 11, 34.

²³NHRA, Probate Records, Rockingham County, 1700-1729, Vol. 7, 654.

²⁴Sanborn, 95.

Indian War in 1763 was a period of great economic growth and geographic expansion for the Province. However, before the end of the French and Indian War, economic expansion and population growth outpaced geographic expansion.

The population of the Province grew from around 5,000 inhabitants in the middle of the eighteenth-century to around 50,000 in 1790, that is, the population grew by a factor of ten in just forty years.²⁵ The children of settlers provided the largest single source of that population growth. By the middle of the century, the availability of land and changing social norms encouraged men and women to marry earlier and to remain in the Province. The second largest source of population growth was overseas immigration, with most of those migrants coming from Ireland and the West Indies. Finally, migration from southern New England provided the third largest source of population growth.²⁶

The half-century from 1715 to 1765 was a time of relative peace and rapid growth in population and the economy while the increase in settlement area grew far more slowly and fitfully. In the first half of the century, two short wars, Dummer's War and King George's War, along with a favorable boundary decision from England, cleared the way for geographic expansion by securing the eastern and southern territory. Actual physical settlement of the land happened far more slowly.

²⁵Daniell, Colonial New Hampshire, 134.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 140-141.

The first of those wars, Dummer's War (1722-1725) with the Abinaki, secured the eastern frontier with what is now Maine. The southern part of what is now New Hampshire was already populated with settlers and claimed by both Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Disputes between the settlers and their governments over the territory were always contentious and sometimes violent. In 1740, the Crown settled the long running disagreement between New Hampshire and Massachusetts by giving the disputed territory to New Hampshire. In the 1740s, King George's War secured what is now central New Hampshire along the upper Merrimack River Valley.

Even though Dummer's War and King George's War secured the land along the major waterways, making the main routes into the interior safer for travel, settlement in the interior itself was substantially slowed because of continued warfare between England and France and their respective Native American allies. However, the fact that it was not safe to settle did not stop speculation in the real estate market. New Hampshire claimed the land and the Royal Governor dispersed it in large township grants. Speculators bought and sold rights to the land, often without ever seeing the parcels they were trading.

The combination of increased population and restricted settlement area resulted in a pent-up demand for land during the first half of the 1700s. The end of the French and Indian War, in 1763, opened the way for waves of settlement into the interior of New Hampshire. The Treaty of Paris made Canada a British possession and it broke the alliance between the French and Native Americans in New England. It was not until after the French and Indian War that real estate

investors and potential settlers considered the land between the Merrimack and Connecticut River Valleys and north of Lake Winnepesaukee to Canada safe to occupy.

In the New Hampshire Province, the decade following the French and Indian War, from 1763 to 1773, resulted in almost as much economic expansion as the previous one-half century. Population continued to grow. Settlers moved to townships farther from the seacoast, built more meeting houses, and cleared more acreage for farming.

The economic expansion during that period affected every aspect of life in the colony. Every sector of the economy grew and as the economy grew in size, it also grew in complexity. Internal and external trade increased, as did the level of capital accumulation and speculation.²⁷ Agricultural production, timber products, fishing, and household production of food and non-food items all grew along with both in-country trading and trans-Atlantic commerce. This economic expansion cannot be explained separately from settlers being able, for the first time in several generations, to claim large tracts of land for their own use and wealth accumulation.

In the first few years in a new area, farm families spent all of their non-farming time clearing more land. After enough land was cleared family members could then turn to other types of production. The manufacture of non-food items for family use and for market increased even more rapidly than agricultural crops. After meeting their own food needs, farm families could spend time making

²⁷Ibid., 150.

goods for sale such as leather items, textiles and clothing, furniture, shingles and clapboards, farm implements, hand tools, and metal wares.²⁸

No matter where the farming family lived, that increased production connected them to the rest of the economy and raised their standard of living. Any production or trade beyond the needs of the family led to the ability to accumulate capital which could be used for consumer goods imported from Europe and for food products imported from the West Indies like molasses, sugar, and rum. The ability for even moderately successful farmers to accumulate capital allowed more middle class families to buy and speculate in land than had ever been possible in England.

In addition to European and West Indian markets, agricultural surplus, whether it was meat, cheese, butter, wool, grains, or flax, could be sold in urban areas along the seacoast where available farm land was very limited and could not meet the needs of the concentrated population. Agricultural surplus also found a ready market in the provisioning of armies and ships around the world. Those ships included naval ships, whaling and fishing vessels, and the ships conducting the increasing trans-Atlantic trade.²⁹

²⁸Ibid., 152.

²⁹Howard S. Russell, A Long Deep Furrow, Three Centuries of Farming in New England (Hanover, New Hampshire and London: University Press of New England, 1982), 61.

Timber Resources

Agricultural production and household manufacturing was not the major source of economic expansion during the mid-eighteenth-century. The extraction of the Province's abundant timber resources for domestic consumption and for export far outpaced farm and household production.³⁰ Timber had been a scarce resource in England since before Columbus set sail.³¹ Colonists began harvesting the abundant forest as soon as they arrived. When the Pilgrims made their first shipment home in 1621, the fifty-five ton ship held two barrels of furs and the rest was filled with clapboards.³² The first masts left Portsmouth harbor by 1634.

Timber products were profitable, but labor was expensive and not readily available. That led to the construction of the first water-powered sawmills in North America in the Piscataqua River region, in what is now Maine, in the 1630s. More than two hundred sawmills existed in the Province by 1740 and the number continued to grow. By 1760, annual production of pine boards was nearly twenty million board feet. New England exported timber and timber products throughout the Atlantic trading region. Those products included the ships themselves, naval stores like turpentine, resin and pitch, building supplies, and wooden shipping containers of all sorts.³³

³⁰Daniell, *Colonial New Hampshire*, 152.

³¹William Cronon, *Changes in the Land, Indians: Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 20.

³²*Ibid.*, 109.

³³Russell, 27 and Daniell, *Colonial New Hampshire*, 152.

The growth of the timber industry was not simply driven by export. Even more wood was consumed domestically. Technologically and materially, colonial America was very much still a part of the age of wood. Next to food, wood products for fuel, shelter, containers for storing foodstuffs, and tools were essential to the colonists' survival. It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of wood to colonial Americans. Not yet having access to plastic, petroleum, electricity, or steel, wood products and manufacturing processes dependent on wood were present in almost every aspect of the culture.³⁴

Wood made up the heavy timber frames, as well as floors, walls and roofs of houses, barns, and outbuildings, and furniture for the house itself. Wooden fences and fortifications protected lives, crops, and property. Wooden bridges, barges, and boats carried colonists and their wooden carts over waterways. Farm implements such as plows, shovels and rakes, harrows, hay rakes, ox yokes, sleds, work benches, carts, and wheels were all made from wood. Household tools and utensils such as tables, forks, buckets, barrels, dishes, bowls, and platters were also made of wood.³⁵

Even products not made out of wood required wood in their production. Bread, glass, bricks, and lime mortar required heat from wood. Pig iron foundries and blacksmiths' forges needed charcoal made from wood. Spinning wheels, bobbins and looms, cider casks, and leather tanned with bark all required wood. Products like potash and pearlash became increasingly important for the

³⁴Brooke Hindle, ed., *America's Wooden Age: Aspects of Its Early Technology*. (Tarrytown, New York: Sleepy Hollow Restorations, 1975), passim.

³⁵Cronon, 108-113 and Russell, 97.

production of soap and in the expanding field of chemistry. Tremendous quantities of wood went into fuel. New Englanders favored warm, yet inefficient open fireplaces. An ordinary dwelling needed up to forty cords a year. Wealthier families with several fireplaces in their homes burned even more.³⁶

The exportation of forest products declined toward the end of the eighteenth-century. The timber industry continued to flourish, but, with the end of the French and Indian War, shipbuilding, naval stores, and overseas shipping declined. Between the French and Indian War and the American Revolution, the timber industry shifted from overseas exports to the interior.³⁷ That is, it shifted from shipbuilding to township building.

Every New England settlement needed a regular supply of wood and sawmills often were the center of new settlements. A town's main roads tended to converge on its mill sites. The mills provided the building materials for the town's dwellings, barns, and churches. Mills also ground grain for the town. These were crucial economic services for any community, old or new.³⁸ Dwindling timber resources near the coast made the heavily timbered and sparsely settled lands of central New Hampshire even more attractive. In spite of the danger of continued warfare, lumbermen and teams of oxen moved farther into the interior. Wherever there was sufficient flowing water, entrepreneurs petitioned proprietors or town selectmen for permission to construct sawmills.³⁹

³⁶Cronon, 120 and Russell, 95-97.

³⁷Daniell, Colonial, 218.

³⁸Cronon, 119.

³⁹Daniell, Colonial, 152.

Town founders frequently ensured the supply of lumber for townspeople. For example, shortly after its founding, in 1647, Exeter granted land and water rights to Edward Gilman in return for agreeing “to let the townspeople have what boards they need for their own use in the town at three shillings a hundred, and what two inch planks they shall need for flooring at the same price.”⁴⁰

Forest fires that resulted from a combination of natural and human causes were another factor which very likely aided the settlers in their rush into the interior after 1763. Severe droughts during the summers of 1761 and 1762 not only limited food production, they also resulted in the right conditions for extremely destructive forest fires. The vast park-like forests first reported by Europeans had become densely overgrown by the 1700s because Native peoples had been unable to maintain their practice of regular burning as they had done for many generations before Europeans arrived. Within two generations of the landing of the first Europeans, the fire-managed ecosystems of New England had become overgrown with dense underbrush.⁴¹

In the summer of 1761, a fire begun on the western border of New Hampshire, in Lebanon, burned out of control for over a month and spread north and eastward across the Province to Casco Bay (now Portland) in Maine. Howard Russell, in his history of farming in New England, mentioned it as an example of the need to control colonists’ adoption of the Native American method

⁴⁰Ibid., 53.

⁴¹Tom Wessels, Reading the Forested Landscape, A Natural History of New England (Woodstock, VT: Countryman Press, 1997), 38.

of clearing land by burning. Belknap noted the loss of valuable timber: "Fire raged in the woods of Barrington and Rochester and passed over into the County of York, burning with irresistible fury for several weeks. An immense quantity of the best timber was destroyed by this conflagration." Samuel Lane, a tanner living near the seacoast of New Hampshire kept a daily diary throughout the period. Lane wrote, "much damage was done by fires in the drought, barns, mills bridges etc." The following year, the fires burned closer to his home. According to Lane, "it seemed as if the Country would all be burnt up the face of the Earth being exceedingly dry and terrible winds enraged by the fires in a most distressing manner."⁴²

In 1762, the fires came especially close to Brintwood. No doubt the Sanborn family came together with their neighbors to fight the destruction. Writing about the fires in Brintwood, Samuel Lane noted that "500 people would meet together [to stop the progress of the fires] and watch the fires night and day" as "many buildings, fields and etc. were entirely laid waste and destroyed."⁴³

In addition to all of the destruction of property and timber, the fires must have cleared the way in uninhabited areas for exploration and settlement by destroying, not only the dense underbrush, but in some cases, whole stands of

⁴²Jeremy Belknap, Belknap's History of New Hampshire, (New York and London: Johnson Re-print Company, 1970), Vol. 1, 322, Russell, 94, Charles Lane Hanson, ed., A Journal for the Years, 1739-1803 by Samuel Lane of Stratham, New Hampshire, (Concord: New Hampshire Historical Society, 1937), 72-76.

⁴³Hanson, 75-76.

timber. Such massive fires, two years in a row, may well have taken several years off of the time required for building roads and clearing the land for agricultural use.

The combination of factors -- economic and geographic expansion, population explosion, and pent-up demand for timberlands and farmlands -- created the conditions for a wave of settlers into the interior after 1763. Ironically, the war that opened the way for all those English colonists to rush in and inhabit the newly won lands also contained the seeds that led to the next major conflict, the one we now call the American Revolution. Historian Jeremy Belknap noted that the same issue of the New Hampshire Gazette, in May 1763, contained the text of the Treaty of Paris and the announcement that Parliament planned to pay for the recent war by placing a duty on sugar and molasses and requiring stamps on all legal and business papers.⁴⁴

Under His Father's Roof

In 1763, at the end of the French and Indian War, John Sanborn was sixteen years old and living at his father's house at a place called Crawley's Falls in Brintwood (now Brentwood). In addition to his parents, the household consisted of his two older sisters and his younger brother. His older brother was already out of the house, working on his own farm where he and his wife would

⁴⁴Belknap, Vol. 1, 329.

soon be expecting their first child. By then, the family of five had survived the French and Indian War, the smallpox epidemic in 1761, and the droughts and terrible fires in 1761 and 1762.⁴⁵

Brintwood is located in the western part of the township of Exeter, eleven miles up the Exeter River from Exeter. The area had long been an important source of timber for the colonists. Crawley's Falls was established in 1652, when the town of Exeter granted Thomas Crawley the "liberty to erect a sawmill on the great fresh river...and timber on the common there."⁴⁶

When John Sanborn's father, Elisha, moved there as a young man in the 1730s, Brintwood was a wild and unsettled place. In 1740, when Samuel Lane, the tanner and diarist, was looking for land of his own to make his home, he rejected Brintwood because the township was "too far into the woods to settle."⁴⁷ In those days it was far from the commercial and social world of Portsmouth, and far from control of the Crown. The citizens of Brintwood were interested in keeping it that way.

In 1734, almost forty years before the Boston Tea Party, they participated in what was one of the earliest acts of open rebellion in New England, the Exeter Mast Riot. That year, the Surveyor General of the King's Woods sent a group of men to investigate reports of lumbermen cutting trees claimed by the King. The Surveyor General was particularly concerned about reports of trees being cut for

⁴⁵Brentwood Historical Society, Brentwood's 225 Years: 1742-1967 (Brentwood, New Hampshire: 1976), 71.

⁴⁶Brentwood's 225 Years, 22.

⁴⁷Sanborn, 117 and Jerald E. Brown, The Years of the Life of Samuel Lane, 1718-1806, (Hanover, New Hampshire and London: University Press of New England, 2000), 27.

local use at a place called Copyhold Falls, the next sawmill up the river from Crawley's Falls. The Surveyor General's men had inspected the sawmill and reminded the owners of the Mast Laws. That night, the men stayed at a tavern in Exeter. After dark, a group of prominent Brintwood citizens, dressed as Indians, attacked the inspectors, beat them, and ran them out of town.⁴⁸ Elisha Sanborn was a prominent citizen and a lumberman and it is likely he was one of the participants in the Mast Riot.

Elisha Sanborn was a lumberman, housewright, joiner, surveyor, furniture maker and weaver who lived across the road from the sawmill and iron works in which he was a part owner.⁴⁹ He was born in North Hampton in 1710, the sixth of twelve children. In 1733 he married Lydia Gordon, of Exeter, and they began their family. The following year, when he was twenty-four, Elisha bought 150 acres at Crawley's Falls.⁵⁰ In 1740, he purchased a one-twelfth share of "a sawmill standing upon Exeter River at a place commonly known as Crawleys Falls...together with the twelfth part of all the privileges of the stream and mill

⁴⁸Daniell, 205, Brentwood's 225 Years, 80, Dick Conway, lecture, ALHFAM New England Regional Meeting March 13, 2004, and Donna-Belle and James Garvin, On the Road North of Boston, New Hampshire Taverns and Turnpikes, 1700-1900, (Hanover, New Hampshire and London: University Press of New England, 1988), 140.

⁴⁹This is a summary of information found in various Rockingham County Provincial deeds and early maps of Brintwood and Rockingham County. On a visit to Crawleys Falls in the spring of 2004, I was able to locate the foundation ruins of the saw mill and ironworks on the Exeter River and the Sanborn Family Cemetery.

⁵⁰RCRD, Vol. 21, 27.

yard” and a one third share of the ironworks.⁵¹ Three years later, Elisha bought another one-twelfth share of the sawmill and another share of the ironworks for 7,000 merchantable white pine boards.⁵²

When Brintwood was set off from Exeter in 1742, the Provincial House of Representatives appointed Elisha Sanborn to be one of the first selectmen of Brintwood. That same year, the town voters chose him to “settle the line” between Brintwood and Exeter.⁵³ That was a job that required math skills, surveying instruments, and the trust of the communities on both sides of the boundary.

In addition to Elisha’s skills with wood and iron, he was a businessman, a surveyor, and engaged very successfully in real estate speculation. When Elisha’s father died, in 1727, he left one-third of his lands in Chester to Elisha.⁵⁴ Elisha continued to buy and sell land in Chester for the next four decades. In 1760 he began buying land and sawmill privileges in the interior lands of the Province in Gilmanton and Canterbury.⁵⁵

In 1747, Elisha and Lydia Sanborn had their fourth child, John, named for Elisha’s father. Two years later, Lydia gave birth to their fifth and final child,

⁵¹Ibid. Vol. 36, 379.

⁵²Ibid. Vol. 49, 421.

⁵³Official Records of the Town of Brentwood: (New Hampshire State Library), Vol. 1, 2.

⁵⁴NHRA New Hampshire Provincial Probate Records of Rockingham County, 1700-1729, Vol. 7, 655.

⁵⁵NHRA, New Hampshire Provincial Deeds Index.

another son. When their fifth child was born, Elisha and Lydia's oldest daughter was ten, the oldest son was seven, the youngest daughter was five, and John Sanborn was two.⁵⁶

In addition to their chores at home, the younger Sanborn children attended public school during the winter months. Brintwood voters approved public schooling six months of the year beginning in 1745.⁵⁷ The subjects were reading, writing, and figuring accounts. Given Elisha's level of education, status, and wealth, it is very likely that his children received education beyond the basics. John, in addition to his basic schooling, learned carpentry and surveying, both valuable skills that served him well throughout his life.

In the mid-seventeenth century, in colonial America, a household with five children looked very different than what we might imagine today. The primary organizing principle of the colonial family was economic, and its first goal had to be physical survival. Ensuring the physical and economic survival of the family meant that as soon as a child could walk on its own and show some capacity for reasoning, the family expected the child to contribute to the household. The child's innate ability and the family's economic situation determined how the child spent its very early years. For the sons, the working relationship continued until they could afford to buy property, move out, and support a household of their own. For the daughters, working in their father's household continued until they married someone and began to work in the new household.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Sanborn, 117.

⁵⁷Brentwood's 225 Years, 91.

⁵⁸Wolf, As Various as Their Land, 108-113.

At his father's farm, sawmill, and ironworks, John Sanborn very likely began to work with his father around the age of six. He must have shown a talent for timber work and carpentry because those were the trades in which he was trained. He learned alongside his father, sharing his father's tools and, later, making his own. He, like many young men in the second half of the eighteenth-century, no doubt looked forward to the day when he could move out of his father's house and begin to work for himself and his own family.

Until the late 1700s, as a general rule, colonial Americans viewed children as unformed adults, and childhood as a period of vulnerability and deficiency. The carefree time we think of as childhood ended for colonial children somewhere between the ages of six and ten. John Cotton, a Puritan clergyman, instructed his followers that after a child had reached the age of seven, work at a "calling" or profession was in order.⁵⁹

Elisha Sanborn's youngest brother, James, provides an example of a wealthy family's expectation. Their father thought James would no longer need his mother's full attention, and would be able to provide for his own support by the time he was ten. When Elisha and James' father died, in 1727, he left his wife, Sarah, "all the improvement on my whole estate both real and personal for her support and for the bringing up of my children until my youngest son shall come to the age of ten years and from that time on, one third of all my estate both real and personal during the term of her natural life."⁶⁰

⁵⁹Brown, 3.

⁶⁰NHRA New Hampshire Provincial Probate Records, Rockingham County, 1700-1729, Vol. 7, 655.

Sons of craftsmen learned their trade working in their father's shops with an arrangement much like an apprentice. They began by doing simple tasks and over a period of years, learned all aspects of the trade. The apprenticeship system of fathers and sons not only ensured that children were contributing to the household economy, it was a way for fathers to make sure that their sons could support themselves and their parents, if necessary, for the rest of their lives.⁶¹

Increasingly during the eighteenth-century, sons could no longer count on their fathers being able to bequeath farms to them. Land in the settled areas was simply too scarce. Training in the trades became more common during the eighteenth-century because, as fathers could no longer employ all their sons clearing land and building farms, training in trades became more vital to the family economy.⁶² This resulted in two important shifts beginning to take place in families and society in the years leading up to the Revolution. More young men tended to make their living by being craftsmen and therefore could be more mobile than farmers. Also, many more of them moved much farther away from their families than had ever been customary before.⁶³

The Sanborn family provides an illustration of both trends. Elisha's father had eight sons and settled them all within a few miles of Hampton. Those sons produced thirty-six grandsons. If the family holdings near the seacoast had been

⁶¹Brown, 8.

⁶²Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), 196.

⁶³Robert Gross, The Minutemen and Their World (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 76.

divided by thirty-six, none of the grandsons would have been able to maintain the wealthy status of their fathers or their grandfather. Most of the Sanborn grandsons settled much farther out. They bought land in the tier of townships established just beyond the four original towns. As for making their living from occupations in addition to farming, Elisha and all his brothers were tradesmen as well as farmers. John Sanborn's uncles included two more carpenters and lumbermen, a blacksmith, two cordwainers, a bookbinder, and a weaver.⁶⁴

These shifts in traditional family relationships did not take place without tension between the fathers and sons. Robert Gross, in The Minutemen and Their World, described the shift as a silent struggle between the generations. Fathers wanted to keep their labor force for as long as possible. Sons knew they would have to move out in order to acquire their own property and work for themselves. Even though the expanding population was a sign of the blessings of Providence, the increasing scarcity of land prevented the older generation from settling their sons nearby, as their fathers had done.⁶⁵

The strain between fathers and sons was so well understood, it became a common literary theme in the eighteenth-century. It also came to be used as Revolutionary rhetoric. Writers on both sides of the Atlantic had long used the parent and child metaphor to describe England's relationship with the colonies. Ellis argues that the metaphor of the parent-child relationship provided a flexible literary device to describe the contradictions in the relationship between England

⁶⁴Sanborn, 114-117.

⁶⁵Gross, 76-78.

and the colonists. Politically, the colonists were equal members of the imperial family with the same rights as Englishmen. Economically, the colonies were possessions whose sole function was to increase the wealth of the parent country. The metaphor masked the contradiction by blurring the lines between sovereignty, duty, and mutual obligation. Beginning in the 1750s, writers began to write more and more about the natural propensity of all children to grow up.⁶⁶ Perhaps the most famous of these writers, Thomas Paine, wrote "The title which [England] assumed, of parent country, led to, and pointed out the propriety, wisdom and advantage of a separation. Nothing hurts the affections of both parents and children so much, as living too closely connected and keeping up the distinction too long."⁶⁷

John Sanborn worked as a laborer and lived in his father's house until at least the end of 1770 when he was almost 24. That year, with his father's help, he bought Lot number 149 in Canterbury.⁶⁸ There is no way of knowing how John and Elisha Sanborn worked out the generational tension in their household, but John was part of a cohort of young men who sought to make their way in the world far from their fathers' homes.

When he left, John Sanborn did not entirely leave his father's house behind. Elisha helped arrange the first land transaction and continued to help

⁶⁶Ellis, 13.

⁶⁷Quoted in Wolf, 134-135.

⁶⁸Rockingham County Registry of Deeds (RCRD), Brentwood, New Hampshire, Book 105, 492. The deed lists him as John Sanborn of Brintwood, Labouror. It is possible that this was a different John Sanborn, but since Elisha Sanborn, John's father, witnessed the deed and since it was recorded in 1774, on the same day as the next property he purchased, it is a reasonable assumption that it is the same one.

during his lifetime. In his last will and testament, Elisha gave to his third son, “my broad ax and saws and what Carpenters and Joiners tools I have at his house, he having, received his proportion of my Estate in my lifetime.” When John left, his father let him go more completely than he did his other sons. Elisha and Edward lived their whole lives in Brintwood and worked the land their father had given them in homesteads he provided. They did not receive full ownership to the land and buildings until after his death.⁶⁹

While John Sanborn was working for his father, English settlers had already cleared and settled land by the pond where the younger Sanborn would eventually make his homestead. Travel and trade were well established in the area. An important commercial crossroads already existed near the pond. The Town Records of Canterbury from a meeting on October 20, 1763, describe the “course and distance of a three rod highway from Gilmanton to Soucook Falls.” The road began at the Gilmantown town line and “thence southwest a little southerly to Abraham Batchelder’s house as spotted and cleared and trod thence to the voted highway then about southwest through lot number 153 ...where it is spotted and trod.”⁷⁰ By 1770, the public record formally acknowledged the crossroads near the sawmill site. The Return of Canterbury Road is dated December 17, 1770, and describes the road “that leads from the Meeting

⁶⁹NHRA, Rockingham County Probate Records, Docket #5243, Box # 690023.

⁷⁰Loudon Town Records (LTR) Vol. 1, 98. The roads at the intersection are now known as Pittsfield Road and New Hampshire State Road 129.

House...to Chichester crossing Gilmanton Brook, beginning at the southwest corner of the Lot No. 114 laid out to Abraham Batchelder which is about 5 rods southerly from Josiah Judkins house.”⁷¹

Also before John Sanborn moved away from home, his father worked on a plan to develop a mill site in Canterbury. In 1766, Elisha traveled to Canterbury and met with Abraham Batchelder. The men agreed to “the erecting and building a Sawmill upon a certain mill privilege on a lot of land in said Canterbury.” They also agreed that Elisha would buy 100 acres of the lot from Batchelder and that Elisha could furnish materials, and build one-quarter of the sawmill at that site, maintaining a quarter interest in the sawmill. Those plans were held up until at least 1769, because, according to the Court record, Batchelder did not honor his part of the agreement, despite repeated requests from Elisha. In 1769, Elisha sued Batchelder in the Court of Common Pleas to collect damages for the loss of building materials and to enforce the agreement.⁷²

The Transformation of Lot 149

On December 20, 1770, John Sanborn began to see his plans take a more substantial form. That was the day he bought Lot 149 in the second division of hundred acre lots, in Canterbury, from Henry Elkins, of Hampton. It was the first piece of land he bought in his own name and the parcel was a good purchase. The lot ran along the south side of the road, giving good access to

⁷¹RCRD, Book 101,382.

⁷²NHRA, Provincial Court Cases, Number 19533.

markets and community.⁷³ The land sloped gently from a large stand of timber by the road to a large bog watered by Gilmantown (now known as Sanborn) Brook.⁷⁴

When John Sanborn bought the land in 1770, the times carried considerable promise and great uncertainty. The tension between the Crown and the colonies was coming closer to home. Parliament had been quartering troops in Boston, seventy miles away, for two years by then. News of the Boston Massacre had shocked the colonies in the spring of that year. The Provincial Congress of New Hampshire adopted a non-importation resolve earlier that year, and the Royal Governor's ability to govern effectively shrank with every conflict between the colonists and the Crown.⁷⁵

From the point of view of Lot 149, not much had happened since shortly after the last glacier left over thirteen thousand years before. Not much at all until the last hundred years. When the Laurentide Ice Sheet advanced, it cut the topography of Loudon, just as it looks today, except for a few gravel pits. After the ice retreated, Lot 149 was nothing but bare ledge covered with scattered boulders, rocks, gravel, and sand. Within one hundred years, the grasses, timber and bog had begun to take shape.⁷⁶

⁷³This comes from the Town of Loudon Lot Descriptions, as explained below.

⁷⁴Today, the land still slopes gently from Pittsfield Road to a large bog watered by Sanborn Brook.

⁷⁵Belknap, Vol. 1, 340.

⁷⁶This idea comes from William Sargent, A Year in the Notch: Exploring the Natural History of the White Mountains, (Hanover, New Hampshire and London: University Press of New England, 2001), 14-15.

The New England forest that thrilled European explorers and entrepreneurs took shape slowly over several thousand years. Wessles explains the process in Reading the Forested Landscape: A Natural History of New England. As early as ten thousand years ago, conifers dominated the landscape. A six thousand year period of warmer temperatures, called the Holocene interglacial, changed the forest to one primarily made up of pines, oaks, and birches. After the interglacial, world temperatures began a slow cooling trend and, by approximately three thousand years ago, the mixed hardwood and conifer forest that now covers most of central New England was established.⁷⁷

For the last 12,000 years or so, human and animal inhabitants made use of the land. Most of them had seasonal migratory habits and would stay for a while, gathering, growing or hunting food and then move on. Of all the inhabitants and visitors to the area, beavers building dams caused the largest changes on Lot 149 over the years. Beavers cut down trees and built dams to store their winter food supply. The beaver dams enlarged the waterways or ponds into shallow bogs that fostered aquatic plants, the beavers' summer food supply.⁷⁸

⁷⁷Wessels, 148.

⁷⁸Ibid., 101-109. The next most obvious example of inhabitants changing the ecosystem to their advantage is the Native American practice of regularly burning the understory to make travel and hunting easier. According to Cronon, Indians in northern New England did not appear to have engaged in managing the forest with fire for at least two reasons. One, the short growing season meant they did not engage in agriculture and so did not need to clear fields. The other is that the tree species of the northern forest were not adapted to repeated burning (Cronon, 50). Ecologically, Loudon is on the border between central and northern New England with widely ranging growing conditions dependant on a site's exposure to sun and wind. Much of Lot 149 is a swamp and would not have been a likely site for fire managed forestry. Without specific evidence and no good basis for generalizing, I did not assume that the Indian inhabitants and visitors to Lot 149 engaged in fire managed forestry.

Native Americans also used the area, hunting, trapping, and fishing for their year round food supply as well as for hides and furs. In addition to hunting in the forest, the grassy edge-zone of the bog and the bog itself provided habitat for birds and grazing mammals that were an important resource. Somewhere around 1670, a different type of hunter came along. This hunter came by way of the waterways and Indian trails, just like the others, but he dressed differently and he seemed to have a different sense of purpose. He looked intently at the water, the grass, and the trees surrounding the bog, and then moved on.

This hunter did not look for meat or fur to make it through the winter or for grass to make mats and baskets. He did not look for just the right tree to use to make a boat or a bow. This hunter scouted and took note of the timberlands and marshes to report back to the other hunters. He was hunting for merchantable commodities, resources that could be extracted from the land and sold across the Atlantic for a profit.

Well before the French and Indian War, just a few of these types of men hurried through, looked around, and hurried on. Then men came in parties of three to six, sometimes more. Those men stayed longer, dragged chains through the underbrush and peered at the forest and each other through brass or wooden boxes on three legs. They cut out pieces of bark from trees along their way and carved marks on some of the trees. The men made marks on stacks of paper and then they too moved on.⁷⁹

⁷⁹For descriptions of surveying from the surveyor's point of view, see Garvin and Garvin, 40-43, Hanson, 46-56 and 87-98, and Belknap, Vol. 1, 56-58.

The first group of men looked to see what commodities, like tall trees and meat and furs, could be taken and sold to European markets. The next group looked at the land itself as a commodity, and divided it into units or lots to be traded and sold. The marks the men made on paper did not describe anything about how the land looked or how it might be used. The marks simply numbered each lot and defined its boundaries. When the men got to Lot 149, that John Sanborn would purchase in 1770, one of them wrote, "Beginning 4 rods southwest from the southwest corner of the Lot No. 107, then southwest 101 rods to a red birch No. 149, then northwest 115 rods to a beech No. 149 then northwest to the voted road then southerly by said road to the first bound."⁸⁰ Before that time, for its entire history, no one knew exactly where Lot 149 began or ended or how it sat in relation to the other lots around it. Imposing boundaries based on a grid system and naming the lot represents a dramatic difference between the ways Native Americans and Europeans thought about ownership of land. While Native Americans believed they had use of the land and could claim the resources the land provided, Europeans were claiming the land itself for private ownership.⁸¹

John Sanborn bought Lot 149 from Henry Elkins. When Elkins bought Lot 149, in 1755, he did not buy a specific parcel. Rather, he purchased "All the undivided land of the original right of Joseph Jones of Durham which lands layeth

⁸⁰LTR Vol. 1, 41.

⁸¹Cronon, 62-67; Garvin, New England Prospect, 61-65.

in the Township of Canterbury in the Province of New Hampshire.”⁸² At that time, the lot belonged to all the common and undivided lands that the proprietors had not yet subdivided. Henry Elkins simply bought a lot in the township. The language in the deed, “all the undivided lands,” did not specify how much land or where in Canterbury Township it was located. His purchase entitled him to have and to hold whatever piece of land the proprietors assigned to Joseph Jones, whenever the land was surveyed. He held a legal claim to an unspecified piece of land that did not have a physical location until nine years later when surveyors for the Town of Canterbury walked the land with compasses and chains, wrote down the corner markers and boundaries of the lot, and entered the returns into the town records.

This type of lot description, called metes and bounds, is based on a description of the lot's markers and boundaries. The system of surveying the land simplified buying and selling the vast amounts of real estate Europeans saw and claimed for themselves when they arrived. Early deeds in New England followed the custom in England and tended to describe land in terms of its topography and use such as uplands or mowing fields. Boundaries tended to be physical features such as brooks, trees, or “the edge of the marsh.” Boundaries, in another sense, could also be related to the use of the land, such as the “ox common” or “the orchard.”

⁸²NHRA, New Hampshire Provincial Deeds, Vol. 100, 105-106. The deed does not indicate if the two Elkins men are related. The right to the property had very likely been sold at least once before because there is no record of a deed from Joseph Jones to Thomas Elkins.

American real estate speculators created new legal definitions of parcels and land ownership that had nothing to do with the physical features, the occupation, or the use of the land. These lot descriptions were unlike previous definitions of land ownership in either European or Native American usage. Resources or topographical features on the land might still affect its value, but were no longer related to its description.⁸³ Many lots changed hands, by inheritance or sale, without their exact location and boundaries determined until a majority of the deed holders requested that the town survey the lots.⁸⁴

In order to expedite the distribution and settlement of large tracts of land, the Provincial government and private investors developed the range township system. The range township system is a system of subdividing all of the land of a township into rows of equal-sized lots divided by range roads. James Garvin argues that the range township system that evolved in New Hampshire developed between the years of 1719 and 1750, and was an early version of the system used later by the federal government to survey and encourage settlement in the Northwest Territories and beyond. The original town plan of centralized villages surrounded by farmlands evolved to the six-mile square, divided from edge to edge into hundred acre lots.⁸⁵ Garvin concludes that the subdivision

⁸³Cronon, 75.

⁸⁴Richard Candee, "Land Surveys of William and John Godsoe of Kittery, Maine: 1689-1769," in New England Prospect: Maps, Place Names and the Historical Landscape: Proceedings of the Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife, June 27-29, 1980, ed. Peter and Jane Benes (Boston: Boston University, 1980), 12.

⁸⁵James Garvin, "The Range Township in Eighteenth Century New Hampshire," in New England Prospect: Maps, Place Names and the Historical Landscape: Proceedings of the Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife, June 27-29, 1980, ed. Peter and Jane Benes (Boston: Boston University, 1980), 47-50.

system that evolved during the eighteenth-century was a physical reflection of a social change taking place throughout New England during those years: the move away from centralized villages paralleled the move away from centralized authority.⁸⁶ This rationalized system of property division and description aided real estate speculation by reducing land ownership to the possession of a deed, rather than a system based on occupation or use.

Cronon argues that the deed recording system is an American innovation designed to simplify land transactions. Land, as a commodity itself, could be bought and sold more easily.⁸⁷ Those deed records were so central to the foundations of wealth in the colony, they were among the first documents to be removed from Portsmouth to Exeter for safe keeping after the outbreak of the American Revolution.⁸⁸

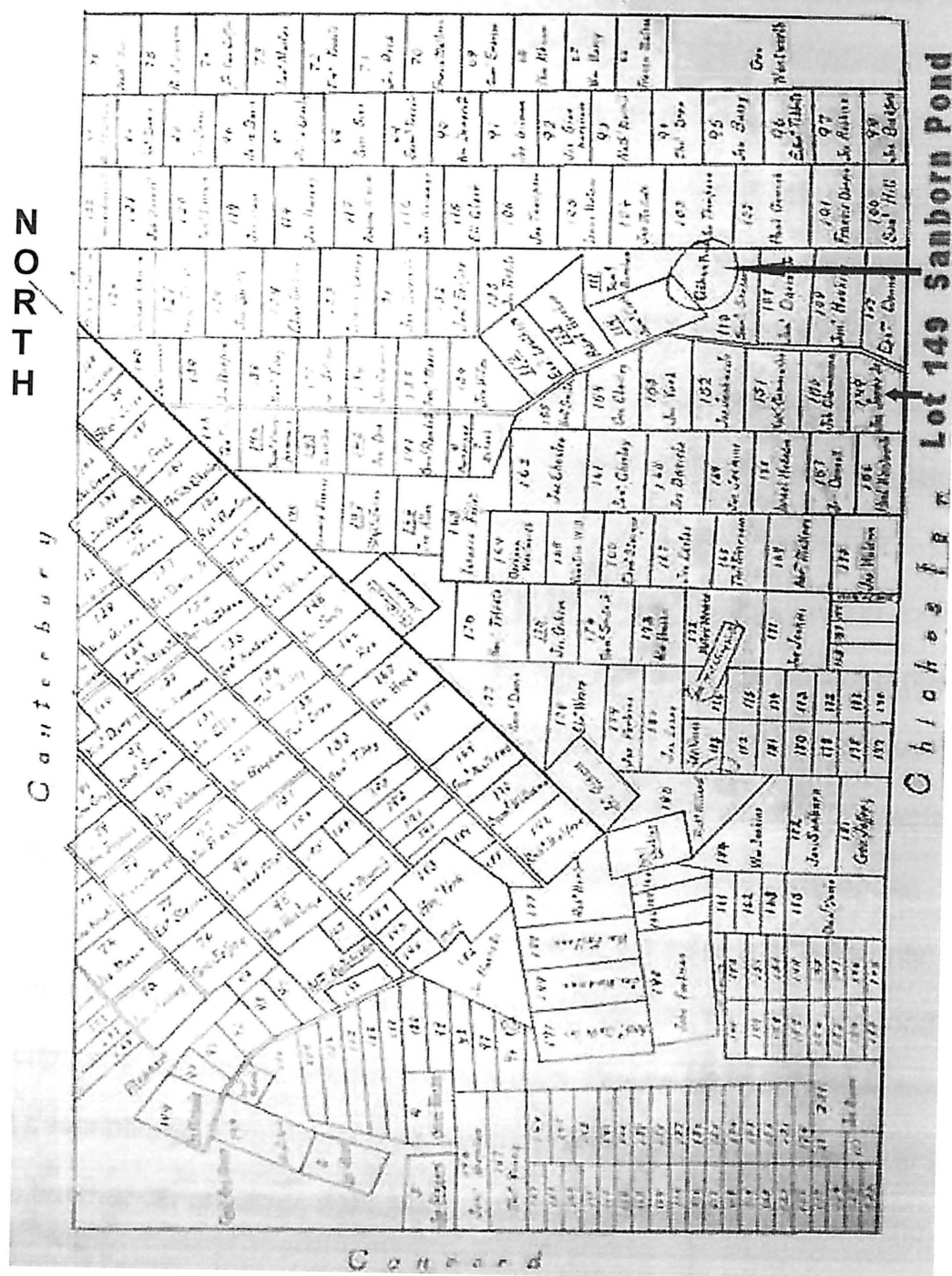
The town plan of Loudon illustrates a stage in the transformation of how colonists subdivided land in America. The Royal Governor granted Canterbury in 1727 and the original settlements, in the part of the township that later became Loudon, developed around two village centers. The village of Loudon grew around the falls on the Soucook, and the village of Loudon Center at the crossroads near Gilmantown Pond. The proprietors of Canterbury did not lay out the remaining lots until after 1760. The change in methods of subdividing can be seen in the two irregular village centers surrounded by an area of forty-acre lots and two areas of hundred acre lots.

⁸⁶Ibid., 62-68.

⁸⁷Cronon, 75.

⁸⁸Belknap, Vol. 1, 362.

U D I U D III I G



A Plan of Loudon, drawn by R. Potter

C a t e r d

At a meeting in February 1762, the proprietors voted that “one hundred acres of the common and undivided lands be laid out to each proprietor’s right the year ensuing.” They also chose a committee to lay out the lots and instructed them to “bound the lots at two corners, fix the points for the side lines.” The work was to begin after the summer growing season, “by the first of September next and follow it till finished.” The following month, the proprietors instructed the committee to lay out a road to Chichester that passed through the second division, “in the convenientest place of a Parish and to a Market.”⁸⁹

The survey committee reported their work to the town two years later at a meeting in April 1764. The Proprietors voted to accept the returns of the lots, including Lot 149. They also assigned it to the original right of Joseph Jones, Junior. At the same meeting, they raised money by selling the lots of proprietors who were behind on their payments.⁹⁰

In the absence of illustrated surveys or pollen analysis, the lot descriptions give the most information about what Loudon looked like before European settlers began the process of deforestation. Since the lot descriptions only mention a single tree on two corners of each lot, they cannot be understood to be a description of the forest. What is interesting is the variety of trees mentioned in the lot descriptions. The most common tree mentioned as a corner marker is a beech, but that cannot be understood to mean the most common tree in the forest was a beech. The surveyors worked in late fall or winter when farm work

⁸⁹Official Records of the Town of Canterbury (New Hampshire State Library), Vol. 1, 309.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, Vol. 1, 701-702.

could wait and they could move through the woods more easily. Beech trees are easily identifiable since they hold their leaves in the winter. Other trees noted regularly by the surveyors in the lot descriptions include: rock maple, hemlock, spruce, white pine, pitch pine, white ash, red oak, black birch, red birch, yellow birch, and gray birch. These types of trees, found in the lot descriptions of the surveyors of Canterbury, fit with the descriptions of central New England forests given by Cronon and Wessels. The central New England forest was a patchwork of deciduous and coniferous trees with the type of tree in a particular location depending on the altitude and solar orientation of that section of forest.⁹¹

Unlike the later deeds, which reference only the lot number, the survey committee's lot descriptions contain information about other aspects of the landscape. Some of these were natural resources that the proprietors reserved for the use of the town's residents. For example, on Lot 103, just northeast of Gillmantown Pond (now Sanborn Pond), the Loudon Town Records say, "two acres of clay with one acre of upland adjoining are reserved for the benefit of the public to dig clay and make bricks and a 2 rod highway is reserved to haul clay and brick from thence to the nearest road."⁹² Lot 193, on Soucook Falls, reserved "three acres ...for the privilege of logs and lumber."⁹³

These descriptions show that the roads leading to Loudon Center were laid out and used well before Loudon became a parish in 1773. The Canterbury Town Records from 1763 describe what is now known as Highway 129, or

⁹¹Wessels, 19, 38, 56; Cronon, 24-29.

⁹²LTR, Vol. 1, 26.

⁹³Ibid., Vol. 1, 57.

Gilmanton Road, as “a three rod highway laid out from Gilmanton to Soucook Falls.” It began at the Gilmanton line and ran by the Batchelder house “as spotted, cleared and trod.”⁹⁴ This highway connected the mills at Loudon Village and Loudon Center with the water transportation and commercial connections available on Lake Winnepesaukee. The highway running east and west by Gilmantown Pond, now Pittsfield Road, was laid out in 1770, going from the corner of Lot 114 just “south of Josiah Judkin’s house,” across Gilmantown Brook to the Chichester town line.⁹⁵

Roads were critical to the economic success of individual settlers living on decentralized farmsteads and to the community. Roads provided access to markets and to the rest of the community. The surveyors mention roads, existing or planned, on almost every lot description. In describing many of the lots, the surveyors recorded information about a road that settlers already used before the surveyors came along. On the rest of lots, the surveyors included a reservation for a road that did not yet exist. In many cases, the lot descriptions designate a road “across said Lot where the Selectmen think best.”⁹⁶

The description of Lot 153 includes the reservation for town use of “a 3 rod highway the whole length of said lot where it is cleared and was laid out before said lot.”⁹⁷ Lot 114 includes a three rod road “across said lot where it is now cleared.”⁹⁸ The description for Lot 104 is more specific. Here, the surveyors

⁹⁴Ibid., Vol. 1, 98.

⁹⁵RCRD, Book 101, 384. Also, NHRA, State Highway Right of Way Source Records.

⁹⁶ LTR, Vol. 1, passim.

⁹⁷Ibid., Vol. 1, 42.

⁹⁸Ibid., Vol. 1, 30.

reserved a road "from the southwest corner northwest 72 rods on said lot then the highway runs a little northeasterly through said lot."⁹⁹

To figure out what Sanborn bought, we can compare the lot description to the town plan and a modern map. The New Hampshire State Highway Department Right-of-Way Source Records trace the right-of-way of what is now Pittsfield Road back to the lot descriptions and the division of lots in the Canterbury Town Records.¹⁰⁰ This documentation indicates that the road was cut, and still remains, in essentially the same place it was first laid out by the town surveyors in 1764.

Comparing the lot description to a United States Geological Survey topographical map, we find out that Lot 149, a hundred acre lot, was about two-thirds timberland, and the rest, a bog.¹⁰¹ Belknap, in his History of New Hampshire, describes how the collapse or removal of beaver dams left an open meadow, ready to support livestock or hay production.¹⁰² By the time John Sanborn arrived, beaver had been mostly eliminated from New England, but the meadow, in a wide valley along the brook, still remained.¹⁰³

⁹⁹Ibid., Vol. 1, 26.

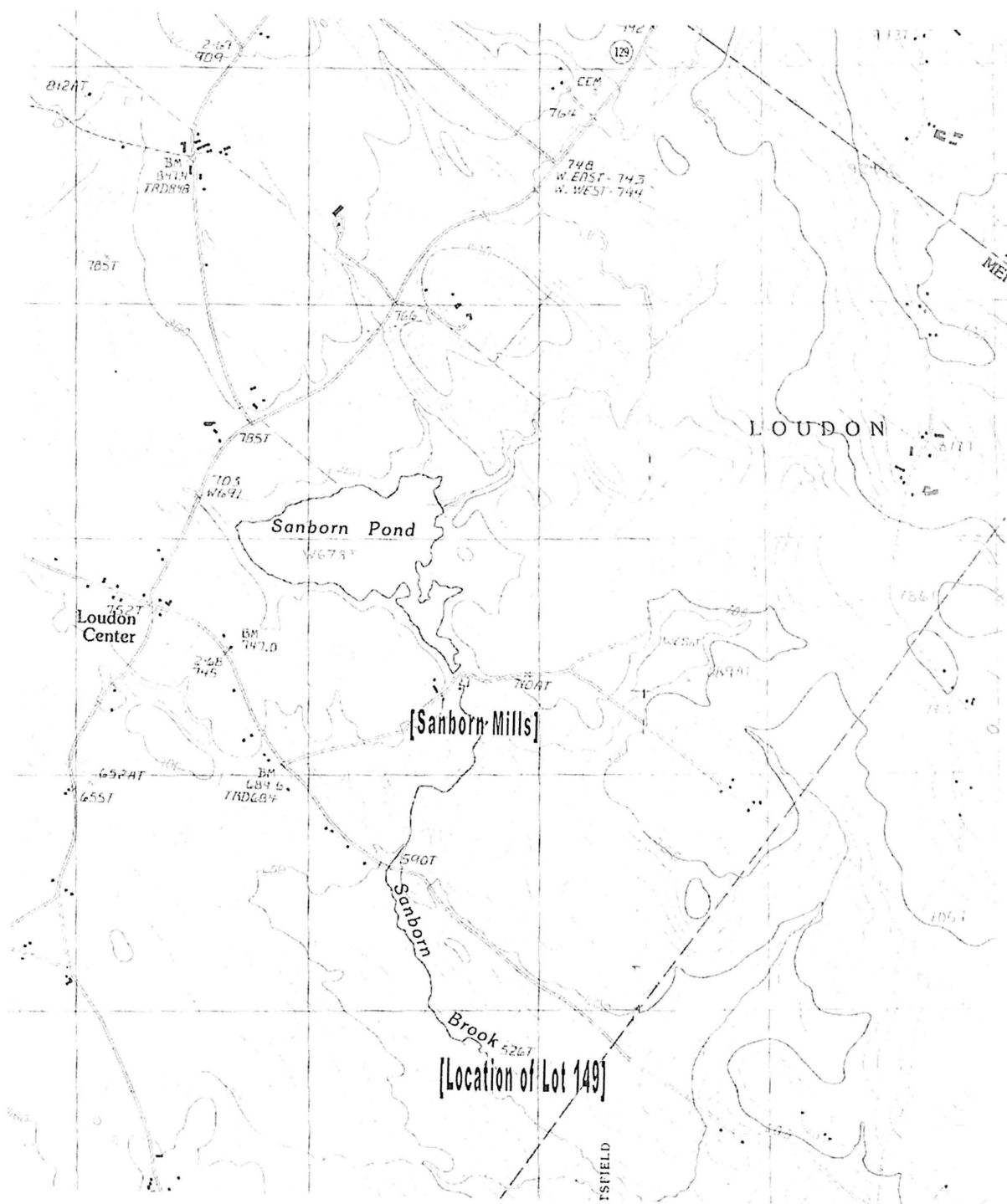
¹⁰⁰NHRA, New Hampshire Highway Department Right of Way Source Records are located in the New Hampshire Division of Records and Archives in Concord, New Hampshire.

¹⁰¹The math: Assuming a standard 16.5 feet per rod, 101 rods from the description = .83 inches or a little over 3/4 inches on the map. 115 rods equals .95 inches on the map. (rods X 16.5 feet/rod X 12inches/foot X 1:24,000 scale on the map.)

¹⁰²Belknap, Vol. 1, 114.

¹⁰³Cronon, 106.

Sanborn Farm, Topographical Detail



Map 4
USGS Topographical Maps, 1:24000
Loudon and Pittsfield, New Hampshire, 1987
Contour interval, 20 feet

On the Elkins to Sanborn deed, Sanborn is identified as a “Laborour from Brintwood.” On his next purchase, in 1773, he is a Yeoman, of Loudon. Leaving his father’s house and buying property increased his social status. He was also following in his father’s footsteps, going and settling new land. What was very different in John Sanborn’s case was that he went farther away from his family than anyone in the previous four generations had gone.

When Elisha Sanborn had moved to Brintwood, eleven miles from his father’s house, he was less than a day’s walk away. When John Sanborn moved to Loudon, more than thirty miles from Brintwood, he was a two or three day walk, depending on the weather and the load. There, away from the authority of his father’s house, young John Sanborn began to find his place in the rapidly evolving community of Loudon.

1773: Continuing Traditions

January 5, 1773

The petition of the Subscribers Inhabitants of the North East part of Canterbury in said Province humbly sheweth That your petitioners live at the distance of ten and twelve Miles (as the roads now go) from the Meeting House in said Town. That the roads are very bad and therefore they can’t without great difficulty attend the public worship of God nor any public affairs of the Town for which reason they have petitioned to be set off into a distinct parish.¹⁰⁴

The English colonists living in the northeast section of Canterbury were not hoping for any big changes when they petitioned the provincial governor to

¹⁰⁴ New Hampshire State Papers (NHSP), (Concord, New Hampshire, various editors, various publication dates), Vol. XI, 263.

be set off as a separate parish in 1773. Settlers had been living in that part of Canterbury since the 1760s. By 1773, enough inhabitants had settled there to be able to support their own community functions by building and maintaining their own meeting house. They intended to replicate their traditional form of church-based government and keep their familiar social order the same. They simply wanted their meeting house closer to home. They were doing exactly as their parents and grandparents had done in every previous generation when they settled in a new area. The cultural and political transformations that came about as a result of the civil disturbance we now call the American Revolution got in the way of those intentions.

Since waterways served as primary routes of transportation, waterfalls provided power for mills, and bodies of water provided necessary support for farming and livestock, rivers, waterfalls, bogs, and ponds had determined the settlement, traveling, and trading patterns long before the English colonists arrived. The Loudon terrain is generally hilly, and streams, ponds, and bogs are common. In 1773 the land was heavily forested with a mix of hardwoods, tall pines, and conifers. Settlers sought out stands of hickories, maples, ashes, and beeches. These deciduous trees produce rich humus and indicated prime agricultural soil to New England colonists.¹⁰⁵ Originally, the forested areas opened up wherever there was a bog or pond. Now, more and more, settlers cut down, burned and removed the forest to make way for roads, fields, and farmsteads. Sawmills, pastures, hayfields, farmsteads, and the dwellings

¹⁰⁵Cronon, 115.

associated with them were clustered around bodies of water and trails or rough roads connecting the settlements to each other and to markets in Portsmouth, Newburyport, and Boston.

According to the Provincial census of 1773, of the 206 inhabitants of Loudon, fifty-eight (just over one-quarter) of them were males under sixteen years old. There were twelve unmarried men, between the ages of sixteen and sixty, and John Sanborn was one of them. Thirty-eight married couples made their home in the town. Unmarried females were not categorized by age and there were a total of fifty-four of them. There were two men over sixty and three widows whose ages are not given. There was also one female slave.¹⁰⁶

Despite all the recent changes in “taming” the landscape, the seasons governed the inhabitants, every day of their lives. Settlers spent most of their waking hours working and the weather and seasons determined what work they did. The seasons required planting in the spring, cultivating in the summer and harvesting in the fall. Livestock, born in the spring and summer, was butchered by settlers in the cool weather of fall and winter. Settlers cut timber to be used for lumber in the winter, when the sap was down, and had it sawn at sawmills in the spring when water was running the fastest. To clear fields, settlers cut trees in the summer, in full leaf, and burned them in the winter, the dry leaves providing tinder. Settlers put up fruits and vegetables throughout the growing season as crops ripened.

¹⁰⁶NHSP, Vol. XV, 625; NHRA, Early Documents, Town Inventories, Box 20, Loudon Inventories.

Fall and early winter was also the time of year for preserving and packing meat, both domesticated livestock and wild game. Preserving all kinds of foodstuffs required canning, pickling, salting, and drying. Winter was time to make non-food items like linen and woolen textiles and clothing, furniture, and leather goods. It was also the season to make and maintain the tools used during the other three seasons. Since roads could be quite muddy and rutted for much of the year, winter was also the best time to haul agricultural products, finished goods, and timber products to and from markets on the seacoast, and conduct legal business with the courts. In spring, the roads were often too muddy for travel and summer and fall, the settlers were too busy.

In Loudon, the mills and population centered around two waterways, one at the falls on the Soucook River, called Batchelder Mills, now Loudon Village. The other was Loudon Center near the mills on Gilmantown (now Sanborn) Pond. Just as in every New England settlement, the mills were the center of the community. According to James and Donna Belle Garvin, there was a steady stream of traffic that rarely moved faster than five miles per hour. People and livestock walked by, pushing or pulling timber and farm products to and from markets. Horses carried people and packs, but for heavier loads, teams of oxen, moving about one-and-a-half miles per hour, pulled carts of freight and timbers from the interior to the seacoast.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷Garvin and Garvin, 90.

The winter of 1772-1773 proved a mild one and spring came early that year.¹⁰⁸ In January, the colonists learned that the Royal Governor approved their petition. The citizens of Loudon were now free to establish a meeting house for town government and religious functions closer to home. In February, the selectmen of Loudon announced that the first meeting of the new town would take place on March 23rd at Abraham Batchelder's dwelling.¹⁰⁹ Also in February of that year, John Sanborn bought his second tract of land. He bought one hundred and twenty acres of timberland "by the edge of Gilmantown Pond," parts of Lots 110 and 114 from Abraham Batchelder.¹¹⁰ The deed for this transaction identified him as a yeoman, "a common man [*not nobility*] of the first or most respectable class, a freeholder, a man free born."¹¹¹

A decade before, in 1763, Abraham Batchelder had bought Lot 114, "all the common and undivided land belonging to the original right or share of Samuel Carle" from the proprietors of Canterbury.¹¹² Later, after he and the committee surveyed the second division of hundred-acre lots, Carle's right became Lot 114 on Gilmantown Pond. In April 1764, the freeholders of Canterbury raised money by selling the lots belonging to proprietors who were behind on their taxes. At that sale, Abraham Batchelder was the highest bidder on lot number 110, to the original right of Samuel Shepard.¹¹³ To ensure a good

¹⁰⁸Hanson, 80.

¹⁰⁹LTR, Vol. 1 152.

¹¹⁰RCD, Book 106, 183.

¹¹¹Noah Webster, An American Dictionary of the English Language (Springfield, MA: George and Charles Merriam, 1855), 1287.

¹¹²RCD, Book 102, 59.

¹¹³Official Records of the Town of Canterbury, Vol. 1, 701-702.

title, he also paid Samuel Shepard for the rights to his land in 1768.¹¹⁴

Batchelder had no doubt he was buying good land since he had been head of the committee that surveyed it for the settlers and proprietors.

When the land owners of Loudon petitioned the Crown to become a separate parish, the residents of Loudon were hoping to have more local control over their lives and their livelihoods. They wanted the seat of that control, the meeting house, to be closer to where they lived. At the first meeting after Loudon was legally separated from Canterbury, they set up the same legal and religious institutions, and chose men from the community to oversee the same town functions that colonists had been tending to for the last forty-five years in Canterbury and for the last century and a half in New England.

Just as in England, the town, which was intimately tied to the Congregational Church, served as the basic unit of community organization and provided the structure for governance. In the new settlements, just as in the old, family ties and kinship connections were the basic elements of social and economic organization and stability.¹¹⁵

Royal government was never deeply rooted at the town level. Appointed officials derived their authority as much, if not more, from their social and economic status as from their commissions.¹¹⁶ Since the middle of the seventeenth century, colonists in New Hampshire townships had maintained local control of their affairs with the system of town government. Each year

¹¹⁴RCRD, Book 101, 380.

¹¹⁵Daniell, 40.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, 237.

townsmen gathered to choose communal leaders, each with specific responsibilities to ensure the welfare of the community and to vote on community projects such as providing a minister, building schools, and road construction. Town government touched every aspect of community life, promoting order and economic prosperity as well as social and religious stability.¹¹⁷

At the first meeting of Loudon parish, the freeholders and inhabitants chose a moderator for the meeting and selectmen for the year. They chose field drivers to oversee the production of crops and fence viewers to see that the crops were protected from loose livestock. The sealer of weights and measures, the sealer of leather, and the surveyor of lumber were appointed by the voters to ensure fair trade practices and protect commerce in, and beyond, Loudon.¹¹⁸

In 1773, the town's economy depended largely on barter. The Crown recalled all paper currency in 1771 and gold and silver were not always easy to come by.¹¹⁹ The freeholders voted to pay one man "22 dollars to fall twenty acres of trees on the parsonage to be paid in corn at Christmas at the market price."¹²⁰

The town freeholders chose John Sanborn for two jobs, both important in different ways. The first job was deer keeper.¹²¹ Like field drivers and fence viewers, this job was necessary to protect the crops from predators. The job was

¹¹⁷Ibid., 39-44.

¹¹⁸LTR, Vol. 1, 152.

¹¹⁹Belknap, Vol. 1, 344.

¹²⁰LTR, Vol. 1, 153.

¹²¹V.C. Sanborn calls this job *door keeper*, a difference that could result from trying to read hand written records that were more than a century old when he was trying to read them. In several places in the Town Records, the job is spelled *dear keeper* and I have assumed it is the job of keeping deer out of the fields all year rather than watching the door during meetings.

a relatively low status job for the younger men in town. The voters also elected John Sanborn as one of two men “chosen as a committee to settle the Select Men Accounts.” This job, since it required math skills and good relationships within the community, indicated more respect from the town.¹²² As a young man of twenty-six years, he was literate and familiar with keeping accounts. He had reasonable math skills, and the members of his community considered him trustworthy. He was settled in a new community and took an active part in its development, just as his father had done thirty years before in Brintwood.

At the final meeting of the year, in November, the voters discussed two items essential to an eighteenth-century New England town, building the meeting house and laying out and maintaining roads. The announcement for the meeting called all freeholders and inhabitants to select a location to build a meeting house and to see if those who had worked more than their requirement on roads that year could apply their efforts to the following year.¹²³

Most towns had their own struggles with the conflict between the town government and individuals’ rights and responsibilities well before the American Revolution broke out. The struggle in Loudon over the location and the raising of the meeting house lasted for the next six years. Roads will continue to be an issue for as long as Loudon is a town. The request to roll over some inhabitants’ work to the following year was denied by the majority of voters. For reasons they did not record, the selectmen rescheduled the November

¹²²LTR, Vol. 1, 152.

¹²³Ibid., Vol. 1, 154-56.

meeting to December 9th. Just five days after the last meeting of the year, on December 16, the Boston Tea Party brought the impending war closer.

1774: Changes in the Political Landscape

The winter of 1774 was mild and the residents of Loudon completed their first major community building project. They raised the parsonage so they could go about settling a minister in town. They also worked together to build more roads and clear more land.¹²⁴

During the past year, the population of people and livestock had grown significantly. The number of resident taxpayers increased to sixty-four, up 28 percent from the year before.¹²⁵ By now, eight residents recorded earmarks for cattle and sheep. John Sanborn registered his mark that year. He used a slit in the left ear to identify his loose livestock.¹²⁶ Livestock roaming freely, fenced out of fields and orchards, was the norm throughout rural New England in the eighteenth-century. By 1774, loose livestock became enough of a problem that the freeholders voted to build a pound.¹²⁷

The tax records of a town provide the names of heads of households and an idea of their property holdings. The records also show what projects the community undertook and who worked on them each year. During the previous

¹²⁴Hanson, 80. LTR V. 2, 156.

¹²⁵LTR, Vol. 2, 2-3.

¹²⁶Official Records of the Town of Loudon, (Loudon Historical Society) 370.

¹²⁷LTR, Vol. 1, 157.

year, the constable had disbursed funds to pay the schoolmaster, pay the minister, and pay someone to board the minister.¹²⁸ Residents carried out all the community building and improvement projects in new townships, and towns financed the projects with taxes, called rates. The constable's job meant assessing and collecting taxes from everyone in town and keeping accurate records of his work. With little money in circulation and few extra laborers, assessments for road rates (taxes for building and maintaining roads) often were in the form of labor for the residents and money for property owners who did not live in Loudon.¹²⁹ The constable paid those who worked on projects as well as providing refreshments of rum and snakeroot for large building projects.

No one wanted the job of constable and the town often had trouble filling the position, particularly during periods when money was scarce. More than any other job, town tensions and power struggles became apparent with the job of constable. In March 1774, money was scarce and the voters decided not to pay town officers for their services. They made an exception and agreed to pay the constable five pence per pound for collecting the rates because no one wanted the job.¹³⁰ Much later, in 1796, the townspeople voted to "let out the constableness and collection of taxes at vindue [auction] to the lowest bidder."¹³¹

At the same meeting in 1774, the town's freeholders chose Sanborn, along with four other men, as Surveyor of Highways. The Surveyor of Highways

¹²⁸Ibid., Vol. 2, 6.

¹²⁹LTR, Vol. 2, 5.

¹³⁰Ibid., Vol. 1, 157.

¹³¹Ibid., Vol. 1, 392.

laid out new highways and organized residents to work and maintain existing ones. He had learned surveying while growing up in Brintwood and, no doubt, took an active part in the physical development of Loudon. Surveying land for road layouts, subdivision and deed records required advanced math and trigonometry skills and specialized instruments. Sanborn's probate inventory, from 1826, included a surveyor's "compass and book and apparatus."¹³²

In the next four months, several things happened that moved the Province even closer to war. The Provincial government was already in a great deal of trouble. The influence of the Royal Governor, John Wentworth, in Parliament and in the Province had been eroding for some time. In May, after a standoff between the Governor and the House of Representatives, the representatives left the assembly room and reconvened at a local tavern. There, they formed a Committee of Correspondence and requested that everyone in the Province observe a day of fasting and prayer on July 14th. The Committee of Correspondence evolved into New Hampshire's Revolutionary Government.¹³³

On May 16, 1774, Samuel Lane, a tanner and businessman living in New Hampshire, recorded in his diary, "This year there are great Commotions in the Nation and this Land about the tea that was destroyed in Boston last winter: and by Act of Parliament the Port of Boston is Shut up on the first day of June

¹³²Merrimack County Registry of Deeds (Concord, New Hampshire), Probate Record #295.

¹³³Belknap, Vol. 1, 351 and Jere Daniell, Experiment in Republicanism, New Hampshire Politics and the American Revolution (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 101.

1774.”¹³⁴ At the end of the year, he observed, “This year the Port of Boston is shut up and ships of war and armies of men sent to Boston to enforce the British acts -- A Continental Congress met at Philadelphia in September.”¹³⁵

At the town meeting in July 1774, the voters of Loudon were concerned with their usual agreements and disagreements. They voted in favor of spending money to hire a minister and to provide schooling. They rejected an article, “to see if the freeholders and inhabitants will agree with Abraham Batchelder or John Sanborn for a highway through either of their land.”¹³⁶

After the July meeting, John Sanborn does not appear in the record of town meetings for the next three years. His involvement in the growing tensions between the colonists and the crown took him away from service as an official in Loudon. He remains in the tax records for community and military service and he is in the Family Records. In October 1774, he married Ruth Rand, daughter of Thomas Rand of Hampton and Deerfield. Like most marriages among wealthy New Englanders in the eighteenth-century, there is little doubt that his family knew her family well. His younger brother had married her sister four years earlier.¹³⁷

In December, almost exactly one year after the Boston Tea Party, the impending war came even closer. On the afternoon of December 13, Paul Revere arrived from Boston to warn Portsmouth’s Committee of Correspondence

¹³⁴Hanson, 45.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, 80-81.

¹³⁶LTR, Vol. 1, 161.

¹³⁷Sanborn, 164.

that General Gage of Massachusetts was planning to seize the munitions stored at Fort William and Mary, in New Hampshire, near the entrance to Portsmouth Harbor. Revere also told them that the King had issued an order prohibiting the export of munitions to the colonies and that new supplies would be difficult to acquire.

The next afternoon, over four hundred New Hampshire militiamen seized the garrison and carried away over one hundred barrels of gunpowder and arranged to hide them in the interior. While the raid was going on, couriers spread the word throughout the country towns and, by the next morning, more than one thousand men marched on Portsmouth. They returned to the fort and took away most of the rest of the arms.¹³⁸

1775: For the Good Order of Peace of said Parish

Just after the New Year, the New Hampshire Committee of Correspondence sent runners to all the towns of New Hampshire, "warning them of their danger; exhorting them to union, peace and harmony, frugality, industry, manufactures, and learning the military art; that they might be able, if necessary, to defend the country against invasion."¹³⁹

In February, the selectmen of Loudon called a meeting to discuss parish business and to respond to the request of the Congress to "pay our part of the

¹³⁸David Hackett Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 55-57; Belknap, 353. Belknap relates essentially the same story, but does not mention Paul Revere.

¹³⁹Belknap, 354.

cost of sending delegates to Philadelphia.” At that meeting, in addition to discussing how to finance the meeting house and schools, the voters agreed to pay for their part by taking three and a half dollars out of money voted to hire a minister.¹⁴⁰ That decision marked the first of many times the voters chose to divert money from the upkeep of the town to finance the war. Sending a delegate to Philadelphia was among the first of many decisions the townspeople would make in the coming years that reached far beyond their town boundaries.

An early spring followed a mild winter in 1775.¹⁴¹ That year, the annual meeting in March was much like the two before. The voters chose a moderator for the meeting and men to serve as selectmen for the coming year. They chose the constable, highway surveyors, deer keepers, a keeper for the new pound, haywards. The voters also decided on that year’s work requirement for maintaining the highways, and to hire a minister.¹⁴²

Several incidents between the residents and the British Regulars quartered in Boston led to rising tension in New Hampshire and throughout the colonies. Spring brought the news, from Parliament, that “the commerce of the New England colonies was to be restrained, and their fisheries prohibited; and that an additional number of troops, horses and foot, were ordered to America.”¹⁴³ Less than a month later, Samuel Lane wrote, “the most Unnatural

¹⁴⁰LTR, Vol. 1, 162.

¹⁴¹Hanson, 81.

¹⁴²LTR, Vol. 1, 163.

¹⁴³Belknap, 355.

Civil War between Great Britain and America; which began on the Memorable 19th of April 1775, in a Battle at Lexington: and increased and continued, by raising large Armies, and fortifications against each other.”¹⁴⁴ News of the first shots reached Newburyport by the afternoon and reached Portsmouth by early morning, April 20th.¹⁴⁵ Whether the news came to Loudon up the Merrimack from Newburyport or across the Province from Portsmouth, there can be little doubt the people of Loudon heard about it within two days.

The day after the battle at Lexington and Concord, a third New Hampshire Provincial Congress met at Exeter in response to the events. They reorganized the militia and appointed a commander of the New Hampshire troops in Massachusetts and ordered the commander to purchase supplies. After conducting emergency business, the members adjourned in order to bring in more members from throughout New Hampshire. Those new members included John Sanborn’s father, Elisha Sanborn, Esquire, of Brintwood, and from Loudon, Abraham Batchelder’s father, Nathan.¹⁴⁶

Ten days later, after the Battle, the selectmen of Loudon published a call to meet on May 10th. Before the battle, the citizens of Loudon were mostly concerned with their roads, fences and fields and preaching of the gospel in their town. There is no question they knew about the rising tension throughout the colonies, but that tension had not been the business of the town, until now. At the May 10th meeting, the voters chose “to raise money to buy provisions for our

¹⁴⁴Hanson, 81.

¹⁴⁵Fischer, 324.

¹⁴⁶Daniell, Experiment in Republicanism, 103-104; NHSP, Vol. VII.,454

soldiers this present year.” They also voted that the money spent “on account of war be taken out of the money that was voted for preaching and schooling.”¹⁴⁷

In June, after confrontations with the Colonial House of Representatives and citizens of Portsmouth, Governor Wentworth and his family retreated to Fort William and Mary and a mob of citizens of Portsmouth ransacked his house. Although three more months went by before he fled the Province, ninety-five years of formal British rule effectively came to an end that summer.¹⁴⁸

The collapse of the Royal Government shifted the full responsibility for governance to local authority. The voters of Loudon lost no time in ensuring the order and stability of their own community. On July 17, they voted to “choose a committee for the good order of peace of said parish of Loudon.” They chose seven men for the Committee of Safety, to direct the militia and to maintain order in town. To ensure communication with the rest of the Province and colonies, they appointed two men for the Committee of Correspondence.¹⁴⁹ Community order was not so threatened in Loudon, where most residents were engaged in farming. In seacoast towns, like Portsmouth, the trade embargo resulted in large numbers of sailors, dock workers, and shipbuilders who “for want of employment” threatened the peace and order of the community.¹⁵⁰

Belknap and Daniell report incidents, in New Hampshire, of vigilantism and efforts to restrain tensions between those who wanted independence and

¹⁴⁷LTR, Vol. 1, 167.

¹⁴⁸Belknap, 357; Daniell, Experiment in Republicanism, 91.

¹⁴⁹LTR, Vol. 1, 168-69.

¹⁵⁰Daniell, Experiment in Republicanism, 100.

those who still pushed for reconciliation. If there were tensions between Whigs and Tories in Loudon, it is not recorded in the Town Records. In March 1776, the Continental Congress recommended that all persons who would not sign an oath of loyalty, called the Association Test, be disarmed immediately. While other towns in New Hampshire named all those who refused to sign the Test, the selectmen of Loudon wrote, "we have carried this instrument to the inhabitants of Loudon they have all signed, saving one or two that lived very much out of the way."¹⁵¹ Presumably, the Loudon Committee of Safety did not disarm those one or two that lived out of the way.

Effects of War

History is written from a distance, with the benefit of hindsight. Whole parts of the story and some details may be compressed or deleted, as needed. For the people who experienced it, the War of Independence was one more interruption of their daily and seasonal lives, similar to many that had gone on before. There were only eleven years between the end of the French and Indian War and the outbreak of the American Revolution. Time spent on militia training, men gone away to fight, inflation, shortages of goods, or increased numbers of widows and orphans could not stop the annual cycle of planting and harvesting crops or tending livestock.

¹⁵¹NHSP, Vol. XX, 91.

In Colonial New Hampshire, Daniell, arguing from the point of view of an economic historian, states that the war itself had relatively little direct impact on New Hampshire. No fighting took place within state borders and the New Hampshire men who joined the Continental Army and state militia regiments only occasionally saw active duty. Also, the percentage of adult males who left their homes for any length of time was much smaller than for any of the colonial wars.¹⁵² A more accurate claim however, might be that *warfare*, or battles and the presence of soldiers among civilians, had relatively little direct impact on New Hampshire.

In the Minutemen and Their World, Robert Gross paints a very different picture of the deepening recession following the French and Indian War, magnified by the increasing scarcity of trade goods and imports and the underlying anxiety, sometimes changing to panic, that was a constant as the conflict evolved.¹⁵³ Even though he was writing about Massachusetts, the same could be said for New Hampshire.

Samuel Lane, writing in his diary as the events were unfolding, observed an impact. "This spring comes on a Civil War and the most difficult times ever known in this age: the course of Law and Courts of Justice are stopped and almost all public affairs are carried on and transacted by Congresses and Committees through the most of this Continent."¹⁵⁴ Later, looking back and summing up 1775, he wrote, "-- in short, the Continent are in the Utmost

¹⁵²Daniell, 245.

¹⁵³Gross, 105.

¹⁵⁴Hanson, 45.

Confusion and Distress, and know not what to do. - Every place on the seacoasts, are putting themselves in the best Posture of Defense they can. And thousands of the inhabitants of Boston and other towns; that were allowed to remove; have removed into the country, in the utmost distress; not being allowed to take much of their effects with them: Boston is almost ruined.”¹⁵⁵

In Loudon, the town records show the war changed the lives of the citizens in significant ways. In 1775, there were twice the normal number of official town meetings and no doubt there were many more unofficial meetings. The citizens of Loudon had to begin to think quite differently about their own identity as individual citizens and as members of a wider governing body. For the first time, the town leaders had to concern themselves with major decisions far beyond township lines. The townspeople often voted to take money from preaching and schooling and put it toward the war. In addition to taking money away from customary expenditures, citizens faced additional taxation in men, money, and provisions for the war.

While the Provincial Congress was reorganizing state government to deal with the new situation, citizens of Loudon continued to plant crops and pay for war. The workings of a new state government were well underway and the leaders of Loudon were challenged not only collect to taxes and protect crops, but also to maintain peace in their town and to participate in the formation of a new state and national government.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵Ibid., 81.

¹⁵⁶LTR, Vol. 1, 165-175, passim.

In all, the town of Loudon paid fourteen men to go to the battle at Concord after news of the outbreak of war. That April, 8 percent of the male population in Loudon left their farms just before planting time. They also paid for “numbering the people” and “numbering the fire locks.”¹⁵⁷ That year, there were two new categories not included in the previous inventory: persons gone in the army and the number of working guns in town. “We have taken the number of firelocks and there is 49 fit for use and wanting 36.”¹⁵⁸ That means there was about one working gun for every two adult males, and they needed to find or make guns and ammunition for the rest.

As the harvest was winding down, the war came closer again. In October, “the Regulars burnt the town of Falmouth, or Casco Bay [now Portland, Maine]: upon which the people of Portsmouth removed into the country at a vast expense: Expecting to share the same fate very soon and the Province immediately in great numbers went to building fortifications in the Harbor of Portsmouth.”¹⁵⁹ The panic along the seacoast must have had a great effect on John Sanborn, since his family lived only a few miles away from Portsmouth. It is conceivable that he left Loudon and returned to Brintwood to help with the fortifications.

What was the larger change in Sanborn’s world? The move from his father’s house to Loudon or the changes of this past year? As the notion of

¹⁵⁷LTR, Vol. 2, 12-13.

¹⁵⁸NHRA, Early Documents Town Inventories, Loudon, Box 20.

¹⁵⁹Hanson, 46.

homeland was rearranging, his home in Loudon was also changing. In November 1775, Ruth Sanborn gave birth to their first child. They named him Elisha Sanborn, after John's father.

In December, Parliament passed an Act prohibiting all trade and commerce with the thirteen colonies. The embargo would continue for the rest of the war and made the goal of self-sufficiency far more important for the colonies and for individual towns than ever before. Urban areas, without sufficient farmland, were particularly dependent on smaller towns for provisions. Provisioning the Continental Army for the rest of the war also fell mostly to smaller towns where farming was the townspeople's primary occupation.

1776: Toward Independence

We conceive ourselves reduced to the necessity of establishing a form of government to continue during the present unhappy and unnatural contest with Great Britain; protesting and declaring that we never sought to throw off our dependence on Great Britain; but felt ourselves happy under her protection, whilst we could enjoy our constitutional rights and privileges; and that we shall rejoice, if such reconciliation between us and our parent state can be effected as shall be approved by the continental congress, in whose prudence and wisdom we confide.¹⁶⁰

The New Hampshire Committee of Correspondence carefully worded the interim constitution to not offend the Crown and to maintain unity with the other colonies. Almost fourteen months elapsed between the outbreak of the war and

¹⁶⁰Belknap, 365-366.

the Declaration of Independence. For much of that time, colonists still thought of themselves as English citizens and wanted reconciliation, not independence.¹⁶¹

The announcement and meeting records for the annual town meeting in March 1776 in Loudon were the last records to say "Province of New Hampshire." The voters' concerns were the standard ones: gospel, school, and roads.¹⁶² That month the British evacuated Boston and the Continental Army marched in under the command of George Washington, giving hope of victory to the colonists.

Throughout the year, war went along and so did the seasons. In Loudon, the constable paid the men of the militia for going to fight at Concord and for sowing hay on the parsonage lot. Regular work could not stop, even if a war occasionally interrupted. That year, the town paid for roadwork, for the schoolmaster, for soldiers, and for soldiers' provisions.¹⁶³ Whether it was a lapse in record keeping or a slow down in production, no one registered new earmarks for livestock in 1776.

John Sanborn had come to Loudon to establish a homestead of his own and to take an active part in the development of a new township. The coming of the Revolution put his plans on hold. On March 5, 1776, John Sanborn enlisted, as a First Lieutenant in the 10th Company, under Colonel Stickney in the 13th Regiment of Militia, Colony of New Hampshire.¹⁶⁴ The year before, he had gone

¹⁶¹*Ibid.*, 367.

¹⁶²LTR, Vol. 1, 169-171.

¹⁶³*Ibid.*, Vol. 2, 20.

¹⁶⁴NHSP, XIV, 261.

toward the fight at Concord with thirteen other volunteers from Loudon.¹⁶⁵ They had gone as soon as they got the alarm and were gone for two days. The town paid them two shillings a day.¹⁶⁶

The following year, in August, he went to one of the last campaigns in New England, the Battle of Bennington, Vermont. Concord and Bennington are the only campaigns for which the tax records clearly show payments to John Sanborn. It is likely he stayed home and participated in the recruitment and training of new soldiers in Loudon.¹⁶⁷

There were two more major skirmishes that year and in October the British surrendered in New England, saving the region from being cut off from the rest of the colonies. For the next six years, warfare took place in the south and at sea. The war and war disruptions went on and the recession that followed lasted longer than the war itself. It would be another two years before the freeholders and inhabitants of Loudon would build and hold a town meeting in their new meeting house.

¹⁶⁵LTR, Vol. 2, 20.

¹⁶⁶*Ibid.*, LTR, Vol. 1, 172.

¹⁶⁷V. C. Sanborn credits John Sanborn, of Loudon, with going as a member of Captain Sias' Company, in defense of Rhode Island in August of 1778, but it is more likely that it was a different John Sanborn that went. (V. C. Sanborn, 608) A John Sanborn and several other men from Loudon did go on that expedition, but the one that went to Rhode Island was a private and not a lieutenant. (NHSP, Vol. XV, 261) Also, the tax records for that year indicate that Lieutenant Sanborn was paid for "money he lent in part to hire a soldier that went to Rhode Island," for "two days going after soldiers" and for "1/2 day laying out a road," but not for going to Rhode Island. (LTR, Vol., 2, 44) Most likely, the John Sanborn that went to Rhode Island from Loudon was Tanner John Sanborn who first appears in the town records in 1779. (LTR, Vol. 2, 55).

1777: Beginning Again

“This year has been remarkable for the sinking of the value of our paper currency, which has been made in great quantities for carrying out the war, both by congress and the states and much counterfeit.” At the beginning of the year, the court tried to regulate prices, but within a few months, prices had gone wild again, “altering so fast that we know not how to trade.”¹⁶⁸

Warfare in New England lasted only about two and a half years. The war was not over, but, except for the Battle of Bennington, residents of Loudon were able to return to the area and go on with their lives. John Sanborn resumed actively participating in town government and expanding his family homestead. In March 1777, he reappears in the records of town meetings and in the county registry of deeds. In November, John and Ruth Sanborn had their second of eight children. They named her after John’s mother, Lydia.

In the fall of 1777, Loudon had its first large community project in four years. The tax records show the constable paid twenty-three men, including John Sanborn, for felling trees on the school lot for the meeting house. The constable also paid for fish and rum and for the services of the preacher at the work on the meeting house.¹⁶⁹

We can only speculate about how John Sanborn’s experiences during the war might have changed the way he thought about his life or his world. The language of the deed, when he made his first land purchase since the outbreak

¹⁶⁸Hanson, 82, 47.

¹⁶⁹LTR, Vol. 2, 26.

of war, reflects a change in his social status. On that deed, he is still John Sanborn, of Loudon, but he is no longer a *laborour* or a *yeoman*, he is identified as a *gentleman*.¹⁷⁰

Noah Webster, as one of many intellectuals after the Revolution, trying to find a distinct American identity defined *Gentleman* in two different senses, the old and what he hoped would be the new. "In its most extensive sense, in Great Britain, [it means] every man above the rank of yeoman" including noblemen. He went on to write, "In the United States, where titles and distinctions or rank do not exist, the term is applied to men of education and of good breeding of every occupation."¹⁷¹

Conclusion

A complex array of social, cultural, political, and ecological transformations took place at the end of the eighteenth-century. By the time John Sanborn died, in 1826, his homestead, the town of Loudon, and the nation had been through tremendous changes. Today, we tend to think of colonists in New England as Americans. This work has shown that the colonists were shaped far more by their European backgrounds, and that during their lifetimes, an American identity began to take shape more clearly. The experience of moving so far from home, and claiming land and economic opportunity for themselves broke down European cultural and social traditions. Governing themselves and defending

¹⁷⁰ RCRD, Book 132, 114.

¹⁷¹ Webster, 499.

their land and economic opportunities from England opened the way for new political and legal traditions to become a part of American culture.

The evolving township system also represented a move away from traditional centralized community authority. In a certain sense, the change in the township system represents one of many steps toward democracy from sovereignty. As English colonists took steps toward individual freedom from centralized authority, their ideas regarding ownership, use, and value of land became more bounded and static.

When the English settlers of Loudon, along with the rest of the New Hampshire Province engaged in civil war, they did something that no group of Englishmen had ever done before. They formed a new government and separated themselves politically from the parent country. From the records of town meetings and tax assessments, there is no evidence that the freeholders and inhabitants of Loudon had concerns that were different from other newly established towns at the end of the eighteenth-century. After the war began, they had to concern themselves with political questions far beyond their farm and town boundaries.

Today, if you visit Sanborn Farm, you can see the sawmill and gristmill that Edmond, John's son, built in 1827. If you visit Lot 149 and the bog on Sanborn Brook today, it looks very much the way the glacier left it thirteen thousand years ago. The land still appears as the proprietors and surveyors of Canterbury found it in the eighteenth-century with only three exceptions. The first exception is that trees are much smaller because the stand has been cut

down and grown up again several times over the years. The second is that the beavers are no longer hunted and have and built dams, so the water levels are higher. Finally, there is a small residential subdivision right next to the bog. If you like, you can drive into the subdivision and see the bog between the houses. An advertisement for a home on the quiet cul-de-sac would not describe the potential livestock and hay production as it would have in John Sanborn's day. More likely, the ad might describe the setting as an ideal opportunity to live close to nature.

Sanborn Pond, the bog, the brook, and land connecting them were the heart of the economic opportunity and individual freedom that John Sanborn was seeking when he left his father's house. These resources were also the basis of the wealth, community status, and political career he was able to build in Loudon. The research in this paper provides depth to what we know about the region and the very early days of the farm at Sanborn Mills. It also provides a framework for understanding what we see there today.

Looking closely at John Sanborn's life and the transformation of his generation from English subject to American citizen provides a greater understanding of life in pre-revolutionary America. This work makes it possible for local historians to better explain the settlement patterns in New England as they relate to the development of the nation. It also provides local historians the means to more fully interpret the modern rural landscape as a human artifact that shows evidence human modifications from the late eighteenth-century to the present.

Just as the land provided an economic opportunity to John Sanborn, it offers an interesting educational opportunity for a public history interpretation. Traveling along the route from the bog to the pond, visitors could learn about the founding of Sanborn Mills and about the various uses of the land and forest resources in the late eighteenth-century, in the years before the age of wood evolved into the age of iron.

The trail from the bog and meadow to the sawmill provides an excellent setting to explore the ecological changes that took place in New England during John Sanborn's lifetime. From his original purchase of the meadow known as Lot 149, up through the forest to the restored and working sawmill, almost any aspect of claiming and clearing the land to establishing and living in a rural community could be explained and illustrated for the visiting public.

A more elaborate interpretation plan would allow visitors to experience their own reaction to some of the changes that took place in New Hampshire during John Sanborn's lifetime. Visitors could choose, or be assigned, a role or character to play as they move through the recreation of a colonial era farm. Examples of roles that reflect John Sanborn's life in the second half of the eighteenth-century include: apprentice, laborer, farmer, miller, and militia member. The legal and social issues of gender could be interpreted by assigning visitors the role of farm wife or widow. The roles of indentured or enslaved person could allow visitors to learn about class.

By gaining a deeper understanding of the social, cultural, political, and ecological changes in the context of John Sanborn's life, as presented in this

paper, visitors may gain a better understanding of the development of the nation, and possibly gain a broader perspective and insight for understanding some of the same types of cultural, ecological, and political changes that are occurring in the present.

Appendix A

Genealogy of John Sanborn

This appendix is a brief summation of John Sanborn's ancestors in America. The information is taken directly from V. C. Sanborn's

Genealogy of the Family of Samborn or Sanborn in England and America:
1194 -1898.

John Sanborn – 1620-1692. Great great grandfather. Arrived in New England in 1632 with his grandfather, the Reverend Steven Bachiler. Settled in Hampton, (now) New Hampshire.

Richard Sanborn – 1655-1716. Great grandfather. Lived in Hampton.

John Sanborn – 1681-1727. Grandfather. Lived in Hampton. Large land holder on the sea coast and proprietor of many townships in the interior by the time of his death.

Elisha Sanborn – 1710-1787. Father. Settled in Brintwood as a young man. Sawmill owner and land speculator in land in the interior.

John Sanborn – 1747-1827. Settled in Loudon as a young man. Saw mill owner, farmer and land speculator.

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- Candee, Richard. "Land Surveys of William and John Godsoe of Kittery, Maine: 1689-1769." In New England Prospect: Maps, Place Names and the Historical Landscape: Proceedings of the Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife, June 27-29, 1980, ed. Peter and Jane Benes, 9-46. Boston: Boston University, 1980.
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- Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. Old-Time New England Volume 74. Number 261. Boston: Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, Spring 1996.

MAPS

Copies of each of these maps are available at the State Library, the State Archives, and the Historical Societies of the State and of Loudon. In this list, I have indicated where I found the best or most accessible copy.

1764, A Plan of Loudon, Drawn by R. Potter. New Hampshire Town Maps, L-M, New Hampshire Division of Records and Archives, Concord, New Hampshire.

1796, The State of New Hampshire: Compiled Chiefly from Actual Surveys, B. Tanner, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, New Hampshire.

1808, Map of Loudon, New Hampshire Town Maps, L-M, New Hampshire Division of Records Management and Archives, Concord, New Hampshire.

1813, The State of New Hampshire, compiled chiefly from Actual Surveys, by Samuel Lewis, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, New Hampshire.

1987, United State Geological Survey 1:24,000 Topographical Maps

- Loudon, New Hampshire.
- Pittsfield, New Hampshire.

Curriculum Vitae

Linda Pate

Education

- 1999-2005 Indiana University, MA in Public History with emphasis in historic preservation.
- 1995-1997 University of New Mexico, academic work in Mechanical Engineering and Communications
- 1978-1984 University of Minnesota, BA in History and Women's Studies

Experience

September 2004-Present Curator of Historic Properties, Huguenot Historical Society, New Paltz, NY

- Responsible for all of the buildings, structures, and grounds owned by the Huguenot Historical Society. Directs and coordinates the restoration and physical maintenance of buildings and structures. Supervises crews responsible for building restoration, facilities management and grounds keeping.

2003-2004 Event Planner and Researcher, Sanborn Mills, Loudon, NH

- Planned and coordinated a dry laid stonewall building workshop and a barn raising.
- Researched the Sanborn family in New Hampshire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the founding of Sanborn Family Farm and Mills, an eighteenth and 19th century farmstead regional milling complex. Wrote master's thesis based on this research.

2002-2003 Carpenter and Preservation Consultant, Preservation Timber Framing, Eliot, ME

- Stabilized and restored eighteenth-century timber frame churches, barns, houses and civic structures.
- Assisted with historic building documentation and historic structures reports.

2001-2002 Historic Resource Specialist, New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program

- Provided outreach and preservation related technical assistance to grant applicants and recipients.
- Coordinated rehabilitation project review process with New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources.

- Designed grant guidelines for Historic Preservation Planning Studies Grants.

Fall 2000 Intern, Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology, Grants Division

- Implemented plans for the Preservation Grassroots Roundup, 2000, a statewide event.
- Designed database to track grants over time by amount, location and type.
- Participated in grant review and administration processes.

1999-2000 Surveyor and Trainer, Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana

- Conducted district and county historical surveys, documented and photographed historically significant structures and sites for publication and state records.
- Created curriculum and co-trained historical surveyors with Survey Coordinator.

1997-1999 Community Information Specialist, Information and Referral Network, Indianapolis, IN

- Trained and supported volunteers using the Information and Referral system software.
- Researched and wrote up new programs and agencies for inclusion in eight county social services database.

1996-1997 Instructor, University of New Mexico

- Taught communication and presentation skills, technical sketching and computer aided design to classes of 35 to 40 freshmen engineering students.

1980-1993 Professional Carpenter, Minneapolis MN and Albuquerque, NM

- Built and dressed sets for theater, motion picture and television productions.
- Supervised crews and coordinated transportation for film production on location.
- Built or remodeled wide range of projects on residential and commercial sites.

1978-1979 Bicycle Mechanic, Freewheel Bicycle Co-op, Minneapolis, MN

- Assembled and tested new bicycles for sale.
- Instructed members of the public working on their own bicycles in Freewheel's Public Shop.

Memberships and Volunteer Work

- Timber Framers Guild - Active participant in several community based barn raisings and presenter at Traditional Timber Framers Research and Advisory Group (TTRAG) 2004 and 2005.

- New Hampshire Preservation Alliance - Techie and Schlepper at most Alliance events and presenter on barn rehabilitation and reuse strategies at NHPA Barn Expo, 2003.
- Capitol Center for the Arts, Concord, NH - Usher for events, 2001-2004 and painter on project to restore the interior of the 1929, Egyptian Deco Theater, summer and fall, 2003.
- Preservation Trades Network - Assistant to AIA continuing education credits coordinator, International Preservation Trades Workshop, 2003-2005.
- Chiltern Mountain Club, New England outdoor recreational and social organization.